Hafa Adai!

CPA hikes threshold for small purchases from $1K to $10K. PAGE 2
Kilili's community project funding brings $27M to Marianas. PAGE 6

$1

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXII, Issue No. 259

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'I recused myself because of association, not ownership'

The House Ways and Means Committee and House Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee continue with their investigation of the Torres administration's BOOST grant program yesterday. KIMBERLY ESMORES

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Jesus Taisague, who is the Economic Development director at the Department of Commerce, clarified before the House of Representatives joint committee yesterday that he does not have financial interests in any of the five businesses that received over $1.2 million from the Building Optimism, Opportunities, and Stability Together program. Instead, he claims his recusal from reviewing these companies' BOOST application was because of his association with their owner.

See RECUSED on Page 4

MHS team wins NMI App Challenge

The team of Carson Lin, James Lin, Dip Roy, and Jaehoon Son of Marianas High School are the winners of the 8th Annual Northern Mariana Islands Congressional App Challenge.

The Marianas High School

See MHS on Page 4

IPI auctions net receiver over $70K commission

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The receiver tasked with auctioning off Imperial Pacific International CNMI LLC's assets to satisfy outstanding court judgments has reportedly earned over $70,000 as commission from the recent court-approved sales.

According to a recent motion filed by Clear Management Inc.'s attorney Michael White, he is seeking the release of the commission earned by the receiver from previous court-approved sale of IPI properties. When

See IPI on Page 4

Ex-DFEMS chief sued for allegedly illegal Yutu OT

Norita

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

CNMI Attorney General Edward Manibusan continues his efforts to run after those whom he believes illegally received typhoon emergency premium compensation, this time suing former Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services commissioner Claudio Norita.

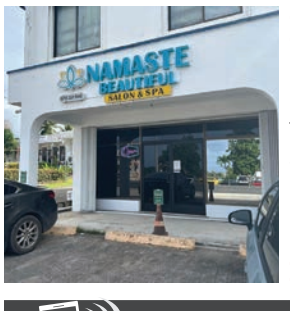
See EX-DFEMS on Page 4

CHRISTMAS DROP
Some 400-to 600-lb bundles of donated food, educational materials, tools, clothing, toiletries, toys, and other supplies are dropped to thousands of people living on tiny, palm tree-covered islands in the Southeastern Pacific as part of this year's Operation Christmas Drop.

Story on Page 7

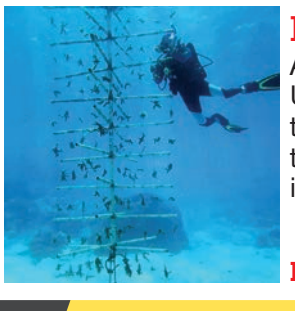
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

INSIDE



BUSINESS
Namaste Beautiful Salon & Spa is one of the newest salon and spa businesses on the island.

PAGE 11



ENVIRONMENT
A team from the University of Guam talks about its efforts to help revive the island's reefs.

PAGE 14

LIFE & STYLE
"José Andrés and Family in Spain" follows the chef on a food tour through his homeland.

PAGE 15

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Local

CPA hikes threshold for small purchases from $1K to $10K

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

In a major policy shift, the Commonwealth Ports Authority has increased its threshold for small purchases from $1,000 to $10,000.

At the CPA board meeting last Thursday on Tinian, the board approved amending procurement regulations for small purchases by upping the limit from $1,000 to $10,000.

According to CPA board chair Kimberlyn King-Hinds after their meeting, it used to be that any purchase above $1,000 requires three quotations, but that "it's very challenging when you're talking about procuring items here when there are very limited options in terms of vendors."

» **Board approves supplemental budget requests**
Board approves supplemental budget

As a result, they recommended in a previous board meeting that the CPA management review "what is the standard for other agencies and also, what's the small purchase procurement threshold in the federal government—and we decided today to increase the threshold from $1,000 to 10,000—which means that we're not required to get three quotations for purchases below $10,000."

But, along with the increase of the threshold, management is required to create a Standard Operating Procedure, or SOP, so that they don't favor just one company.

With the SOP, they will "make sure that we look at what's available around the island—who are the vendors and...as part of that SOP, they'll put together a list of vendors and types of products that are available."

Other items on their agenda was to approve the supplement budget request for the Airport Rescue and Firefighting Facility typhoon repairs at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, in which the funding of $147,287 was approved and will be funded from the Typhoon Yutu insurance proceeds.

Along with this, ARFF roll up doors replacement construction management services was approved for $399,230; and the Customs Border Patrol/Transportation Security Administration implementation architectural and engineering design services was approved for the Tinian International Airport to the sum of $278,700, which will be funded from the Airport Divert Lease Funds.

CPA operates the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport/Rota International Airport on Rota, and the Tinian International Airport, as well as all CNMI seaports.

ROTA VISIT MARK RABAGO
Rota's iconic Wedding Cake Mountain is seen at a distance from the Rota Seaport.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

4.6-magnitude quake in Maug region

At 5:17pm yesterday, Dec. 28, a report of a 4.6-magnitude earthquake occurred at 20.761°N 144.716°E in the Maug region of the Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center. For more information, contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. (PR)

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF:	CIVIL ACTION NO. 19-0210
ANUNCIACION MENDIOLA CAMACHO MAGOFNA a.k.a."ASAKO" Decedent.	NOTICE OF HEARING ON CLAIM FOR HEIRSHIP AND NOTICE TO POTENTIAL HEIRS Date: February 27, 2023 Time: 1:30 p.m. Judge: Hon. Kenneth L. Govendo

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a hearing on the Claim for Heirship in the Estate of Anunciacion Mendiola Camacho Magofna, is scheduled to be heard on **February 27, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.**, in the Guma Hustisia, Imwal Aweewe, House of Justice, in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Any and all claims for heirship of Anunciacion Mendiola Camacho Magofna or her estate is hereby required to be filed with the Clerk of Court on or before **February 26, 2023**. This notice shall be published three times in two newspapers of general circulation in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

SO ORDERED this 28th day of December, 2022.

HON. KENNETH L. GOVENDO,
Associate Judge

Emergency water service interruption last night

There was an emergency water service interruption in the areas of Airport Road Dandan, Lower Dandan, portions of Kannat Tabla, As Perdido, As Lito and Koblerville (from the St. Jude Catholic Church to the ABCD Market in Koblerville and Tottotville) last night from 6pm to midnight.

This was due to the isolation of the 8-inch distribution waterline for Commonwealth Utilities Corp. water operators to perform an emergency leak repair located on the entrance of Exploring Drive in Airport Road Dandan. Customers should expect normal water service soon thereafter.

For more information, contact the CUC Hotline (236-4333) or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates (https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporation/). ***(PR)***

'MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE'

UOG Fanuchånan 2022 graduates receive diplomas

Close to 250 graduates received their diplomas last Dec. 18 at the University of Guam Calvo Field House during the Fanuchånan 2022 commencement.

Dr. Joleen Aguon, a daughter of Guam and UOG alumna, gave the commencement speech. She hoped to inspire the new graduates about her journey—from powering through late nights to complete her Bachelor of Science degree in biology at UOG, completing her Doctor of Medicine at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine in Honolulu, and ultimately coming home to Guam.

Aguon is the associate administrator of Clinical Services and assistant associate administrator of Medical Services at Guam Memorial Hospital. She is a familiar face and voice among health care front-liners in the fight against COVID-19.

The road to becoming a physician was difficult, Aguon said, but she did not give up: "I held on, I cried, I dug deep and with the support of my family and friends, I kept going."

"Do not set limits for yourself or you will never know your full potential. ...Impossible will exist if you do not make an effort," Aguon said to the graduating class.

Valedictorian Cherissa Christina Ollet Adonay now holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education.

"Teachers are more than just 'glorified babysitters,'" she said. "We are the people who set the fundamental foundations for the future generations to come. So, I'd like to ask you all to take a moment and think about all the teachers who made a significant impact on your life. And thank them because without teachers, you wouldn't be sitting where you are today without us."

Before the graduation ceremony, Adonay said she is grateful for how her parents, Cristina Ollet and Wilfredo Adonay, immigrants from the Philippines, raised her with the values of hard work and resiliency, and to focus on her education.

She urged her fellow graduates to "make the most out of every day and be present and in the moment."

The commencement last Dec. 18 capped off the 70th year anniversary of UOG.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

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KBB: $16,761

STK	MODEL	WAS	NOW!
22H298A	2020 MITSUBISHI MIRAGE G4 ES	$15,265	$12,995
18R279	2018 KIA FORTE S	$17,638	$14,995
21H047A	2018 HYUNDAI KONA SPORT	$22,258	$15,995
21D129A	2018 HYUNDAI KONA SPORT	$20,789	$15,995
17P370	2017 TOYOTA COROLLA LE	$20,726	$16,995
17P341	2017 MAZDA 6 SPORT	$18,355	$16,995
16P375	2016 MAZDA CX5 TOURING	$23,499	$16,995
21H079A	2020 HYUNDAI ELANTRA SE	$21,064	$16,995
18P405	2018 HYUNDAI ELANTRA SE	$19,004	$16,995
~~18HS947~~	~~2018 HONDA CIVIC EX-T~~ SOLD	~~$23,458~~	~~$16,995~~
18P393	2018 NISSAN ROGUE SV	$22,661	$17,995
20R292	2020 HYUNDAI ELANTRA SPORT	$24,247	$18,995
22M075A	2015 HYUNDAI GENESIS G80 LIMITED	$24,374	$18,995
21H077A	2013 TOYOTA 4 RUNNER SR5	$23,355	$18,995
18P398	2018 MAZDA CX5 TOURING	$23,263	$19,995
22H186A	2020 HYUNDAI VELOSTER ULT COUPE	$29,120	$19,995
8H054E	2019 HYUNDAI KONA SPORT	$21,651	$19,995

STK	MODEL	WAS	NOW!
17P496	2017 MITSUBISHI LANCER	$20,896	$19,995
17HS1036	2017 FORD MUSTANG CONV	$23,525	$19,995
17HS850	2017 FORD TRANSIT XLT LOW ROOF	$42,381	$19,995
18P397	2018 MAZDA CX5 SPORT	$25,765	$20,995
21D106A	2017 TOYOTA RAV4 SPORT	$23,760	$21,995
18P416	2018 TOYOTA RAV4 LE	$31,648	$22,995
22M032A	2018 HONDA CIVIC EX	$25,840	$22,995
20P476	2020 MAZDA 3 HB PREMIUM	$33,050	$24,995
22M021A	2019 MAZDA 6	$30,118	$24,995
18P345A	2018 HYUNDAI TUCSON LIMITED	$30,451	$24,995
22M050A	2018 TOYOTA CAMRY XLE	$27,271	$24,995
16P387	2016 TOYOTA HIGHLANDER LE	$27,808	$24,995
13P359	2013 TOYOTA FJ CRUISER	$33,890	$27,995
18P344	2018 TOYOTA TACOMA SR5	$34,836	$31,995
20H141E	2018 HYUNDAI GENESIS G90	$24,374	$34,995
18P411	2018 TOYOTA 4 RUNNER	$41,254	$36,995
~~19P367~~	~~2019 HONDA RIDGELINE~~ SOLD	~~$47,459~~	~~$38,995~~

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Two accused of assaulting off-duty firefighter

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Superior Court has imposed a total of $30,000 cash bail on two men who allegedly assaulted a firefighter who was off-duty on Christmas Day.

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho imposed a $20,000 and $10,000 cash bail on Rickson Michael and Julius M. Paul, respectively, last Tuesday for allegedly assaulting an off-duty firefighter of the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services.

Michael, 23, is facing charges of assault with a dangerous weapon, assault, and battery, and disturbing the peace; Paul, 24, faces charges of assault and battery and disturbing the peace.

Following the bail hearing, both defendants were remanded back to Department of Corrections custody and were ordered to return to court for a preliminary hearing on Jan. 4 at 10am. Both men will be arraigned on Jan. 9 at 10am.

According to court documents, the off-duty firefighter was hanging out with his girlfriend in a vehicle at the Aquarius Beach Tower Hotel parking lot early Christmas morning when the girlfriend said she heard a man and a woman yelling near a pavilion by the beach.

She said she went near the pavilion and saw two men shoving each other. Her boyfriend, who was following her with a flashlight, told her to come back. He identified himself as a firefighter and asked the two men what was going on.

The firefighter said he then heard someone shout and saw Michael running toward him.

The firefighter said he threw a punch at Michael who fell to the ground. The firefighter then held Michael to the ground.

Michael continued to struggle with the firefighter who identified himself as a firefighter.

Michael punched him on the ribs once when Paul arrived and started punching the firefighter.

The firefighter said he managed to run away from the two assailants and called 911 in the hotel lobby.

He said Michael threw a rock at him in the lobby before the responding police officers arrived.

What end of vaccine mandate means for US troops

WASHINGTON (AP)—Congress' move to eliminate the Pentagon mandate that all U.S. service members get the COVID-19 vaccine delivers a victory for lawmakers and troops who oppose getting the shot, but it raises questions and potential risks, especially for forces deploying overseas.

A compromise provision requiring Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to rescind the requirement is in the annual defense bill heading for votes this week in Congress. It's expected to pass. And the Pentagon is prepared to dump the mandate if required to do so by law and shift to strongly encouraging troops to get vaccinated.

But the bill doesn't include any order to allow a return to service by the more than 8,000 troops who were discharged for refusing to obey a lawful order when they refused to get the shot. And there appears to be no guarantee that those who don't get the vaccine won't see some potential deployment restrictions, which could affect their military careers.

ERRATUM

Yesterday's issue of *Saipan Tribune* had a wrong date. We apologize for the error and truly thank our alert readers who brought the matter to our attention.

RECUSED

From Page 1

During the continuation of Taisague's testimony before the House joint committee yesterday, he said he wants to put on the record that he does not partly own all five businesses that, collectively, received a total of $1.2 million from the BOOST program, the same program in which he serves as a panel member.

Instead, he claims that he only partly owns Love Birds Restaurant and serves as a resident agent for two others: Flower Tea House and Saipan Horse Course. As for Sakura Group and Saipan Goddess, Taisague said he felt it was a conflict to review these businesses' applications as he is closely associated with company owner Alexandria Jing. Jing is the owner of all five companies.

"It's a grave misunderstanding that I partially own all these five businesses. Let the record reflect [that] the only company I partly own is Love Birds restaurant. The reason I recused myself from reviewing the rest of the businesses is because of my association with these businesses, being a resident agent for two of these companies, namely Flower Tea House and Saipan Horse Course. The rest, it's just business association," he said.

However, following his clarification, Rep. Christina Sablan (D-Saipan) questioned Taisague about chief of staff and BOOST panel member Will Castro's personal interest in all of Jing's BOOST grant applications.

"Will Castro personally followed-up on the awards for Jing, namely Love Birds and Sakura group. Both were awarded early on into the program. How did all these businesses rise to the top of the stack? How are they so unique that Mr. Castro, a member of the review panel and chief of staff, would follow up on these applications and checks personally?" she asked.

"Do you expect people to believe that somehow these applications were all prioritized, somehow, without other intermission?" Sablan added.

Rep. Celina Babauta (D-Saipan) echoed Sablan's sentiment.

"So you expect the people and this committee to believe that it's purely coincidental that your partner Jing, who owns all these companies, was awarded over $1 million because they somehow rose to the top of the stack and that's purely coincidental because of the uniqueness of her businesses?" she asked.

To this, Taisague said he has no comment.

"I have no comment because I recused myself from all of her applications. Whether it's coincidental or what, I can't comment," he said.

During his first appearance before the committee last Tuesday, Taisague refused to give a direct answer when asked about the ownership of the five businesses and his relationship to them. Instead, he cited his Fifth Amendment right (protection against self-incrimination) to not answer those questions.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, on the BOOST program ledger that named all the BOOST awardees, all five businesses received a large portion of the over $10 million BOOST program allocation—about 11%.

Flower Tea House received $325,000, Saipan Goddess received $125,000, Saipan Horse Course received $200,000, Sakura Group received $50,000, and Love Birds Restaurant received two grants, one for $125,000, and another for $100,000. In addition, the companies were the very first to receive their grant awards.

The Commerce director claims he was not involved in the review process for his company's applications as he had recused himself.

The House Ways and Means Committee and House Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee are jointly looking into the BOOST grant program process.

Funded by the American Rescue Plan act, BOOST is project of the Office of the Governor and the Department of Commerce that aims to provide financial assistance in the form of grants to CNMI businesses and non-profit organizations.

MHS

From Page 1

students scored the top rank over 11 other submissions from schools around the Northern Marianas.

"This year's competition saw great submissions from students," said Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP). "Every submission we received demonstrated students' dedication to learning how to code, identify[ing] real-world problems, and coming up with solutions through technology."

Judges for this year's app challenge were former district staff member Katrina Punzalan and current district caseworker Randy Johnson. Punzalan used to run outreach for the Congressional App Challenge through the congressional office for the Marianas. She builds, modifies, and troubleshoots computers as a hobby. Johnson holds a bachelor's degree in Information Technology with a specialty in Software Engineering.

The MHS team's app is called MathPal, a web-based platform that helps high school students understand mathematical concepts through step-by-step user-friendly output.

As the Northern Marianas' winning team, the team of four will receive national recognition and have their work eligible for display at the U.S. Capitol. They will also be invited to attend the House of Code reception in Washington, D.C., where they will have the opportunity to meet fellow coders nationwide and be honored for their work.

The Congressional App Challenge is an annual competition open to middle school and high school students to encourage students to inspire students to actively be involved in STEM learning and innovation. Apps can be submitted for any platform, such as Web browsers, smartphones, computers, or tablets. Next year's App Challenge will commence in late summer 2023. ***(PR)***

IPI

From Page 1

the U.S. District Court for the NMI appointed Clear Management as the receiver in IPI's case, the court provided that Clear Management would be entitled to a 10% commission on all proceeds.

Following the last two auctions, Clear Management reportedly received $301,500 from Angel Playing Cards for the sale of dealing shoes, and $410,100 from the first IPI auction that concluded on Nov. 16.

This means that, to date, the sale of IPI's assets has already netted $711,600, which therefore means that Clear Management's commission is $71,160, White said.

White also added that, pursuant to the appointment of Clear Management as a receiver, it is entitled to a reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred in connection with the sale of IPI's gaming equipment.

Clear Management's total expenses to date amount to $37,867.81.

White asked the court to authorize the disbursement of funds held in the escrow account for the commission in the sale of IPI's gaming equipment.

Meanwhile, White also asked the court for an order approving the report and account of the second auction that concluded last Dec. 8.

In addition, the lawyer asked the court to authorize Clear Management to collect the remaining 85% of the successful bids, execute appropriate bills of sale, and deliver the items sold to successful bidders.

According to White, the total amount of the acceptable bids in the second auction was $252,092.

He said several lots were unsold, because no qualified bids were received or because the bids fell below the reserve price established by the receiver.

Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona scheduled a hearing for Feb. 9, 2023, regarding the disbursement of funds and the approval of the second auction sales.

EX-DFEMS

From Page 1

According to Manibusan, Norita received over $45,000 in typhoon premium pay that he should not have been entitled to after Super Typhoon Yutu hits the CNMI in 2018.

Manibusan has filed his lawsuit against Norita in Superior Court.

As relief, Manibusan asked the court to issue a judgment of $45,042.69 for recovery of the allegedly unlawful typhoon premium payments, overtime payments, or extra payments not authorized by law, without valid appropriation, and in excess of the salary ceiling that Norita allegedly received.

Aside from returning the money, the AG also asks the court to issue a declaratory judgment declaring that the personnel regulations authorizing payment of typhoon emergency premium pay, overtime, and extra pay do not apply to gubernatorial appointees; that the director of Personnel and governor lack the authority to authorize additional compensation except as provided by law; and that compensation in excess of the salary ceiling cannot be authorized except as provided by law.

According to the lawsuit, Norita's total compensation in fiscal years 2019 and 2020 exceeded his statutory salary of $54,000, which is against the law.

In total, Norita received typhoon premium pay in the total gross amount of $45,042.69 with $26,890.14 paid in fiscal year 2019 and $18,152.55 paid in fiscal year 2020.

According to the lawsuit, the defendant received typhoon emergency premium pay on multiple occasions and his typhoon emergency premium pay was paid at a rate of 2.5 times his base salary.

On Dec. 19, 2018, the defendant allegedly received gross wages in the amount of $5,695.41 as typhoon emergency premium pay.

Then, on Dec. 21, 2018, Norita allegedly received gross wages in the amount of $3,556.80 as typhoon emergency premium pay.

On Dec. 29, 2018, he allegedly received gross wages in the amount of $8,827.08 as typhoon emergency premium pay.

Then, on Dec. 31, 2018, he allegedly received gross wages in the amount of $8,810.85 as typhoon emergency premium pay.

Finally, on Nov. 8, 2019, Norita allegedly received gross wages in the amount of $18,152.55 as typhoon emergency premium pay.

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Kilili's community project funding brings $27M to Marianas

President Joe Biden has signed into law the fiscal year 2023 spending bill containing $26,838,182 for 14 projects to improve quality of life on Rota, Tinian, and Saipan. The Commonwealth Department of Public Works, the Office of Transit Authority, the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., Joeten-Kiyu Public Library, Northern Marianas College, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp., and the Public School System will all receive funding. The 2023 funding is a substantial increase over the $4.5 million Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) obtained in 2022, the first year in a decade that members of Congress were allowed to steer federal funds to hometown projects.

Sablan

"This success was a partnership between the congressional office and the governmental and non-governmental organizations in the Marianas that asked me for this congressionally directed spending," Sablan said.

"One reason we were able to increase funding as much as we did is that we put forward strong, well-justified proposals. And the appropriations committee, which makes the decision about what projects to fund, recognized the quality of those proposals.

"So, thanks to everyone who worked with me to bring this project funding to the Marianas."

Congressional earmarks for projects in Members' districts were once a regular feature of annual appropriations legislation. Republicans ended the practice in 2010, criticizing the spending as wasteful. In fact, Sablan's earmark of $4,189,500 to expand parking at the Commonwealth Health Center was singled out as an example of wasteful spending in the 2023 bill by Republicans.

With Democrats in the majority in both the House and the Senate, congressionally directed funding was restarted in the fiscal 2022 spending bill. And many Republican Members of Congress walked away with substantial sums for their states and districts both in 2022 and now in 2023.

"What is important to understand is that for a small place like the Marianas, competing for federal funds through the normal grant process, is difficult," said Sablan.

"Earmarks, like the $27 million in this year's appropriation, are a way for Members of Congress to decide where funding is needed, rather than leaving those decisions in the hands of agency bureaucrats.

"Earmarks are an important tool for me to use to make sure the people I work for in the Marianas do not get left out."

Sablan has already invited government and other nonprofit groups in the Marianas to begin submitting project ideas to their congressional office to prepare for the fiscal 2024 round of funding. ***(PR)***

Public warned of high surf, rip currents; wind advisory out

A high surf advisory remains in effect until 6pm today, Thursday, while a high risk of rip currents is present through this afternoon. A wind advisory is in effect until 6pm today, Thursday.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center-State Warning Point, large breaking waves of 8 to 11 feet are present in west- and north-facing reefs of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. Dangerous rip currents are present in north- and east-facing reefs until 6 pm today. Northeast winds of 20 to 25 mph with gusts of up to 35 mph are expected on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota until 6pm Thursday.

These conditions will create dangerous swimming and surfing conditions and localized beach erosion. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.

The risk along east facing reefs could linger into the new year. Men-o-war have been reported over the past few days and may still be found on beaches and in the water near shores.

Inexperienced swimmers should remain out of the water due to dangerous surf conditions.

The public is advised to stay out of the water along north, west, and east facing reef lines. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help.

Gusty winds could blow around unsecured objects. Tree limbs could be blown down and a few power outages may result.

Winds could settle down slightly last night, then build again Thursday. The shear line should then weaken enough for Friday that will stay below advisory criteria.

The public is advised to use extra caution when driving, especially if operating a high-profile vehicle. Secure outdoor objects. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

Free webinars on government contracting

The Guam Procurement Technical Assistance Center is offering free webinars in January.

Webinars are held every Wednesday from 10am to 11:30am via Zoom. Zoom links are emailed to all registered attendees 30 minutes before the webinar.

· Dec. 28, 2022 – GovGuam Procurement – The Guam PTAC will explain Government of Guam Procurement, where to find opportunities, and how to submit bids.

· Jan. 4, 2023 – How to Register in SAM – The Guam PTAC will take you through the new Entity Validation process, the actual SAM registration, follow-up requirements, and the new annual renewal process.

■ Jan. 11, 2023 – Teaming & JVs – The Guam PTAC will discuss the Federal regulations related to these arrangements and discuss ways to use these arrangements effectively.

■ Jan. 18, 2023 – SBA Mentor-Protégé Program – The Guam PTAC will update you on the eligibility requirements, the application process, and follow-up requirements.

■ Jan. 25, 2023 – SBIR/STTR Programs – These programs encourage inventors and innovators to engage in Federal Research and Development that has the potential for commercialization. The Guam PTAC will explain the programs and show how you can get started.

Register for free here: https://www.guamptac.com/news-and-events.php ***(PR)***

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Division
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514 | Email: cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net | Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com

Tels: (670) 233-9447
233-9448
233-9449
233-9450
Fax: (670) 233-9452

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 5 A. of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation ("NMHC") Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery ("CDBG-DR") Program's Action Plan ("AP"), as amended (2022), this is to notify the general public about this proposed Substantial Amendment No. 02 and afford citizen participation and the opportunity to comment on this proposed amendment. The general public has thirty (30) days from publication date of this Public Notice to submit comments on these proposed changes to the CDBG-DR AP. Substantial amendments are required when there is a change in program benefit/eligibility criteria, addition/deletion of an activity, or reallocation of substantial amounts. A substantial amendment will also be required if any program changes exceed five million dollars ($5,000,000). Substantial amendments must provide a reasonable opportunity (at least 30 days) for citizen comment. All changes must be documented by NMHC's CDBG-DR Program to provide both necessary and reasonable justifications. All substantial amendments will include the following:

1. The exact identification of which content is being added, deleted, or changed;
2. A clear description of where funds are moved from/to; and
3. The updated and revised budget after re-allocation of funding.

Furthermore, the proposed substantial amendment will be available via the CNMI CDBG-DR website at www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com and hardcopies may be obtained at any of the NMHC central and CDBG-DR offices located on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota by those who do not have access to the Internet. Notifying the public is of paramount importance as these funds are largely dependent on public participation and the remaining unmet need to be assessed. NMHC will utilize the following avenues/outlets to notify the public of the CDBG-DR Program:

- Notices in the local newspaper
- Radio announcements
- Social media
- CNMI CDBG-DR website

Finally, NMHC will take reasonable steps to ensure very low-, low-, and moderate-income persons, including persons with disabilities, the elderly and persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access and an equal opportunity to participate in this important CDBG-DR activity and in accordance to prescribed policies and procedures embedded in the CDBG-DR Program's Citizen Participation Plan. The aforesaid and complete Citizen Participation Plan may be accessed at the CNMI CDBG-DR website: www.cnmi-cdbg-dr.com or found on Section 5 on the CDBG-DR Action Plan (pages 80-85). A copy of the CDBG-DR Action Plan, as amended by this proposed change, may be accessed at the CNMI CDBG-DR website at: www.cnmi-cdbg-dr.com or obtained at any of the NMHC offices on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

Written comments are due by January 27, 2023 and may be faxed to Fax No.: (670) 234-9451, mailed to P.O. Box 500514 Saipan, MP 96950, or emailed to cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net.

Tinian Field Office
Tel: (670)433-9213
Fax: (670)433-3690

"NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency"

Rota Field Office
Tel: (670)532-9410
Fax: (670)532-9441

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

JVA No. 23 – 039
REANNOUNCEMENT

Opening Date: December 27, 2022
Closing Date: January 10, 2023

POSITION TITLE:	**Fiscal Assistant**
DEPARTMENT:	**Rota Administration**
LOCATION:	**Rota, Northern Marianas Islands, USA**
ANNUAL SALARY:	**$16,742.00 to $22,602.00 per annum, Non- Exempt**
CONTRACT:	**Not Contracted**
POSITION(S):	**One (1)**

The incumbent will be under the direct supervision of the Resident Manager or his/her designee. This class specification represents only the core areas of responsibilities; specific position assignments will vary depending on the needs of the department.

Duties:

- The Fiscal Assistant updates and verifies customer account or work order information; enters and balances payment data; prepares timekeeping records; may work in the field obtaining and entering customer utility meter information, and replacing or disconnecting utility meters and services.
- Receives customer payments; balances and records cash and other payment receipts; verifies receipts against payment system data; and prepares deposits.
- Monitors and updates customer account information; researches account discrepancies or unusual meter readings; calculates payment information for past-due accounts, new installations and security deposits; reports research findings; and/or follows up on service or work order status.
- Greets customers or receives calls; responds to customer inquiries such as account balance information, payment due dates, minimum payment amounts due or general information inquiries; refers customers to appropriate resources.
- Copies and scans documents; maintains and organizes files records, reports and accounting transaction documentation.
- Updates and maintains spreadsheet reports; prepares fiscal transaction reports or other work activity reports.
- Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

Minimum Requirements:
Education: High School Diploma or General Education Diploma or Adult Basic Education Program.
Knowledge of: Cash handling practices (based on assignment); Customer service principles; Basic mathematical principles; Recordkeeping principles; Safety principles and safe work practices; Applicable equipment used in field utility services (based on assignment); Modern office technology.
Skills in: Receiving, posting and reconciling payments, cash receipts or account information; Verifying and updating account or utility meter information; Providing customer service and responding to inquiries; Coordinating services with other departments or resources; Inspecting and operating field equipment related to utility usage (based on assignment); Performing basic mathematical calculations; Researching account information or discrepancies; Preparing and maintaining files, forms, reports and records; Copying and scanning documents; Updating, maintaining and preparing reports and spreadsheet tracking documents; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction.

All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

How to Apply: Submit a completed CUC Employment Application, resume, and applicable supporting documents to the CUC Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, Monday through Friday 7:30 am – 4:30 pm (Except Legal Holidays). Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota may submit their documents to their respective CUC Administration office. Application, resume and supporting documents can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131
CUC is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

71ST OPERATION CHRISTMAS DROP: LOVE FROM ABOVE

Church, AAFB partner to send gifts to remote Pacific islands

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Guam had a chance to participate in this year's edition of the traditional Operation Christmas Drop, when the U.S. military in Guam drops bundles of supplies in remote islands of the Pacific.

Senior missionary couple Phillips, who currently serving in the Micronesia Guam Mission, participated with Operation Christmas Drop by communicating and coordinating donations between the AFB and the church. This gave the opportunity for missionaries and members to have the chance to purchase and fill five of the 209 bundles that were dropped by parachute.

During this annual, weeklong operation, military air crews flew eight C-130 cargo planes that airdropped 400- to 600-lb bundles of donated food, educational materials, tools, clothing, toiletries, toys, and other supplies to thousands of people living on tiny, palm tree covered islands in the southeastern Pacific, including the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marianas, and the Republic of Palau, totaling 56 islands that received bundles during this year's drops, which ran from December 4 through Dec. 13. Children ran with excitement to greet the bundles as they heard the plane's engines overhead. Once retrieved, the island chiefs laid out the supplies of the bundle then distributed it to their villagers.

Three senior church members were also given the rare opportunity to fly on the planes that delivered bundles to outlier islands of Chuuk, Yap, and Palau.

Elder Jenkins flew on the Santa 31, which dropped bundles over outlier islands of Yap. "Operation Christmas Drop was a huge effort to relieve suffering and bring joy….It was a thrill to ride on the Santa 31 and see the people below anxiously waiting to receive their packages," he said.

Elder Beck and Sister Hill flew on the plane that dropped bundles over the islands of Peliliu and Angaur in the southern part of the Republic of Palau.

Sister Hill tells of how the Marines and Navy Seabees were revamping the runways on both islands. The drop was made in the middle of the partially finished runways on each island.

"What was supposed to be a five-hour flight turned out to be six. It was a long flight but it was a lot of fun! I loved watching the bundles go out of the airplane, drop down with the parachutes, land in the middle of their partially finished runway, and see the people running to the boxes to open them up."

Barrigada Guam Stake members contributed to the drop as they donated toys and other items in boxes located in meeting houses on the island of Guam.

For 71 years, Andersen Air Force Base in the tropics of Guam has continued its long running tradition of dropping love from above. Operation Christmas Drop is the Department of Defense's longest-running humanitarian airlift operation, which began unofficially back in December of 1951 when the crew of a WB-29 Superfortress bomber noticed people waving at them from Kapingamarangi in Micronesia. In the spirit of Christmas, the aircrew dropped a bundle of supplies attached to a parachute to the islanders below, giving the operation its name. A tradition was born.

The aerial delivery enables both USAF and partner nation aircrew the training necessary to develop and maintain combat readiness through aircraft generation and recovery, while delivering donations provided by private donors, charitable organizations, and the University of Guam, to those remote islands in the region. This training mission is not only a tradition but provides relevant and real training necessary for the airmen and partner nations in the Indo-pacific region.

The weeklong international effort allows U.S. Pacific Air Forces airmen from over 22,000 residents across the 374th Airlift Wing at Yokota Air Base, Japan; the 36th Wing, Andersen AFB, Guam; Republic of Korea Air Force, Japan Air Self-Defense Force, Royal Australian Air Force, and the Royal New Zealand Air Force to participate in this year's Operation Christmas Drop. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Guam had a chance to participate in this year's edition of the traditional Operation Christmas Drop, when the U.S. military in Guam drops bundles of supplies in remote islands of the Pacific.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

One of the eight C-130 cargo planes that airdropped 400-to 600-lb bundles of donated items in the southeastern Pacific, totaling 56 islands that received bundles during this year's drops.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Church missionaries and members fill five of the 209 bundles that were dropped by parachute in this year's edition of the traditional Operation Christmas Drop.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Elder Jenkins flew on the Santa 31, which dropped bundles over outlier islands of Yap.

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-23-009

SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF POWER DISTRIBUTION ANNUAL MATERIALS

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified vendors for the Supply and Delivery of Power Distribution Annual Materials for Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.
CUC may award a contract to more than one firm for the materials, based on bids for "Commodity Groups".

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-23-009, Supply & Delivery of Power Distribution Annual Materials, Saipan, CNMI" to CUC Procurement & Supply Division, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Dandan, Saipan MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 a.m. (ChST) on January 19, 2023**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. An electronic copy of the entire submission is also required to be sent via email to CUC Procurement & Supply Division via email address, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

A *Bid Guarantee* of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. All responses to this Invitation for Bids should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the bidder, awarded a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (C1hST) on December 29, 2022** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Marcela Tenorio, CUC Senior Purchasing Technician via email marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org; Joseph Crisostomo, CUC Power Division Purchasing Technician via email joseph.crisostomo@cucgov.org and Alfred Palattao, Jr., CUC Power Division Engineer via email alfred.palattao@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Opinion

Hafa Adai
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXII, Issue No. 259
Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
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EDITORIAL

Another failure on immigration reform

A relatively quiet congressional effort to achieve bipartisan progress on immigration appeared to meet an untimely end last week.

In the mix of the lame-duck session, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, a former Democrat from Arizona turned independent, had been working with Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., on a bill that would have addressed critical areas in immigration: the fate of so-called Dreamers, billions of dollars to secure the southern border, and better, faster processing of asylum claims.

Unable to lock down the 60-vote supermajority needed to end the inevitable filibuster, the two senators will not be able to include the bill in year-end appropriations legislation, all but ending any hope of immigration reform this year.

This is happening against the backdrop of an increasingly chaotic border situation in which more than 2,400 migrants crossed into the U.S. each day of the previous weekend in El Paso, Texas, according to a CNN report, in what was described as a major surge in such crossings.

Congress has remained stubbornly unwilling to enact comprehensive immigration reform for years, refusing to accept even reasonable accommodations to the other side. The result has been stagnation and worse, as an underfunded system increasingly fails to keep pace with current needs.

The situation has become particularly dire for an estimated 2 million Dreamers brought to this country as children. They have lived, gone to school and worked under the threat of being forced to leave the only homeland most of them remember. It is beyond cruel to consign them to a lesser-than status for so long.

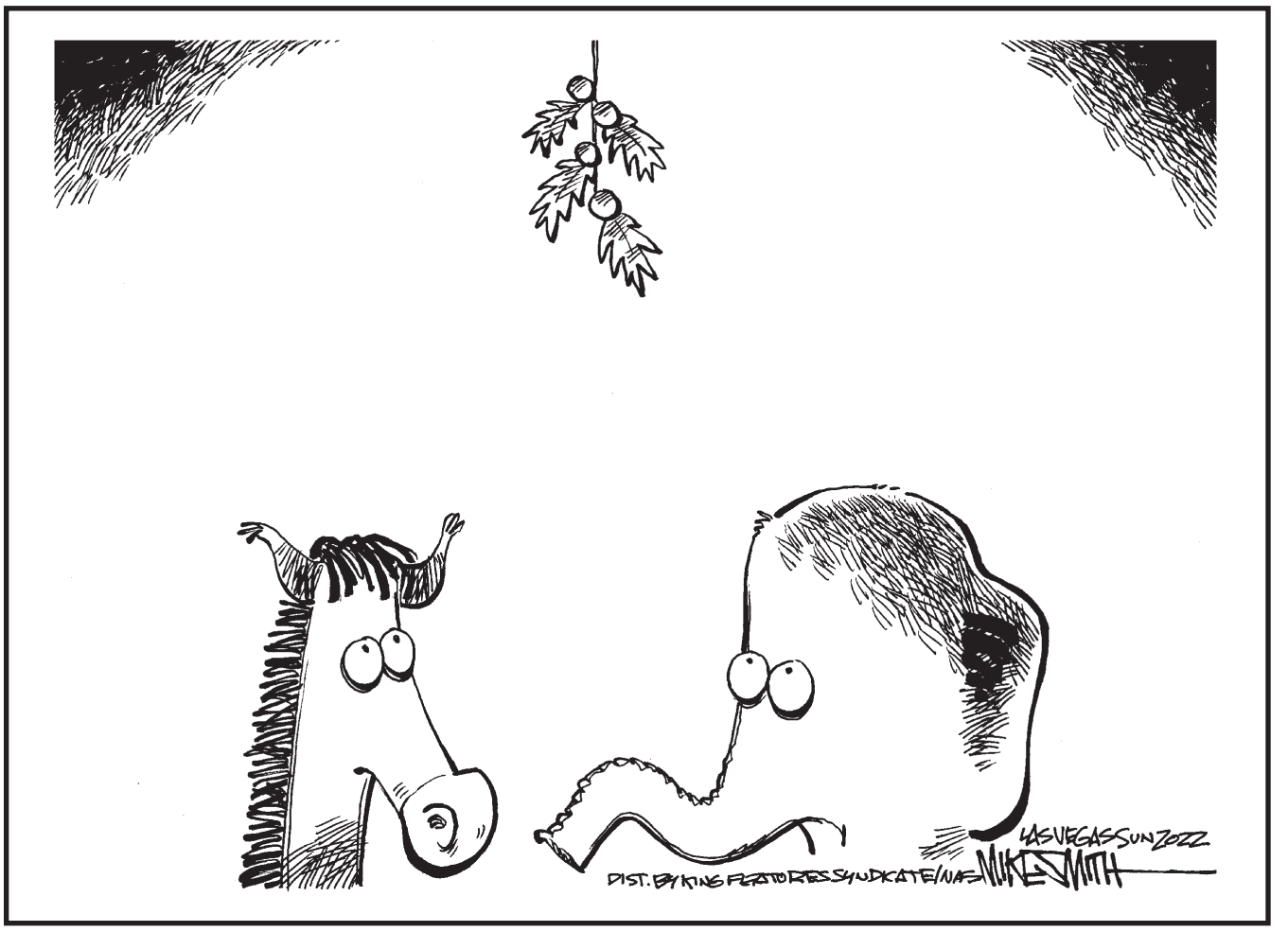
How long? The efforts to provide a legal path for minors brought to this country without proper authorization go back more than 20 years, when the first Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act was introduced in 2001 with bipartisan authors.

It's been an entire decade since President Barack Obama, frustrated at the lack of progress on the issue, signed the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). That executive order gave Dreamers temporary, renewable legal status and authorization to work. President Donald Trump rescinded the order in 2017, leaving Dreamers in an even more perilous limbo. Their situation became more acute when a federal judge in Texas ruled that DACA was illegal and said that while current Dreamers could remain, the administration of President Joe Biden could not approve any new applications.

Biden said at the time that the ruling "relegates hundreds of thousands of young immigrants to an uncertain future" and that his Justice Department would appeal the decision. Statistics collected by the U.S. government show that more than 90% of Dreamers are employed, and nearly half are students. Many do not even speak the language of their original home countries.

Then there is the situation at the border, where thousands may cross in a day. Many migrants turn themselves in to Border Patrol agents on the spot, seeking to file asylum claims. According to the Texas Tribune, more than 5,100 migrants

See REFORM on Page 9



The tech meltdown will help the economy–eventually

By SHELDON JACOBSON
Chicago Tribune

Sheldon Jacobson is a professor of computer science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Jacobson employs his expertise in data-driven, risk-based decision-making to evaluate and inform public policy.

Technology companies are shedding jobs at disturbing rates. Those with experience in computing are being laid off, sometimes with little warning. Freshly minted computer science graduates are facing employment headwinds not seen for well over a decade. Is this the next dot-com bubble burst, which could send the economy spiraling downward to new lows?

Hardly. Every bull market is followed by a bear. Such oscillations are part of business cycles. As painful as they are while they're happening, they serve numerous purposes.

First, they give explosive growth a temporary pause to allow tech companies to catch their breath and reevaluate the landscape. Second, they help the identification of inefficiencies that remain unnoticed when growth surges are overshadowing blemishes in organizations. Third, they force tech companies to reset their priorities that over time will make them stronger and more efficient.

Such a flushing out means that many people will become unemployed or may be unable to find jobs in tech companies, particularly large ones like Amazon and Cisco.

The good news is that such talent is desperately needed in other parts of the economy.

Electronic medical records and artificial intelligence have transformed health care into a tech industry. Many health care technological innovations require advanced algorithms to provide better diagnostics and patient care. Computer science talent is desperately needed to fill the voids that exist. As layoffs persist in tech companies, many of those affected will gravitate toward health care, which will ultimately make the delivery of health care services more efficient and more effective. The impact of such a talent migration will have long-lasting positive effects not only for health care providers but also for patient care well into the future.

Manufacturing is always playing catch-up when it comes to attracting computer science talent. It now sits in a position to hire many of the tech castoffs, providing a vehicle to move high-tech manufacturing forward at greater speeds. For example, bringing artificial intelligence and machine learning into this domain to identify untapped efficiencies and new materials may be a game changer to bring some of the manufacturing opportunities that have been shipped overseas back into the United States.

The United States military has an unlimited need for more computer science talent. One constraint that has limited its ability to attract such talent is citizenship requirements. To work on classified projects requires U.S. citizenship. Many more such people will become available, easing the pressures on advancing defense research and boosting U.S. preparedness well into the future.

There will also be some headwinds during this transformation.

Tech companies attracted computer science talent because of the salaries and perks that they could offer. Many of the people being laid off will have to take pay cuts, something that most people find unappealing. The days of complimentary food, well-stocked gyms and complimentary child care may end. Expectations will need to be tempered as former tech company employees move into new sectors of the economy that offer less lavish amenities.

Yet, such an infusion of talent will create new opportunities that could not be realized with skeleton staff. Instead of having a smattering of tech talent in traditional industries, critical masses will be built that have the potential to make lasting differences.

There is fear that the current tech bubble burst will be like what the country experienced in the late 1990s. Technology has infiltrated every facet of society and every industry. The primary headwind was often finding and affording the tech talent to facilitate advances and discoveries. What will end up being the losses in the tech industry will be the gains for traditional industries.

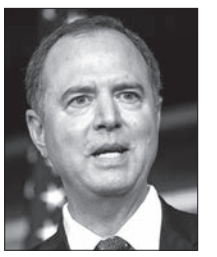
The hope is that this migration of talent will become a lasting part of such industries, not a transient phase followed by the best tech talent returning to the tech industry. A strong tech industry is good for the economy when it comes to innovations and services. However, strong health care and manufacturing sectors add even more value in the population. Moreover, a strong national defense keeps everyone safe.

The next few years will be painful for some. It will, however, make U.S. industry stronger—eventually.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

What comes after the Jan. 6 committee report

By ADAM B. SCHIFF
US House of Representatives



Democrat Adam B. Schiff is a member of the House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol. He represents California's 28th Congressional District.

Last week, the House Jan. 6 committee conducted its last hearing and issued its final report. And we've begun releasing the voluminous evidence gathered during the course of our investigation in the form of witness interview transcripts, exhibits, text messages, emails, videos and more.

It is on the basis of this evidence—not politics—that we have referred former President Donald Trump to the Justice Department for potential prosecution for four offenses: two involving conspiracy charges, another concerning his obstruction of the joint session of Congress, and the most serious, covering his role in aiding and assisting the insurrection.

Not since Watergate has a congressional committee taken on such an important duty of oversight and accountability. But it will be up to Attorney General Merrick Garland, special counsel Jack Smith and the capable attorneys at the DOJ to provide justice.

For the four years of Trump's presidency, the Department of Justice took the position that you cannot indict a sitting president. This is a flawed reading of the Constitution. There is no provision barring the indictment of the nation's chief executive if they are engaged in criminal activity—even if, as a prudential matter, you would defer such a trial until the end of their term. But if the department now decides, after finding sufficient evidence to charge Trump with a crime, that it would be too controversial or too divisive to prosecute a former president, that would effectively immunize him or any future president from criminal liability. The founders would have never subscribed to such a dangerous proposition.

So the Justice Department must hold itself to the standard it set at the beginning of its investigation into the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol: Follow the evidence wherever it leads. But there is more needed to protect our democracy than oversight, accountability and even justice.

There must also be reform. In the committee report, we laid out several steps that Congress must take to prevent another would-be autocrat from tearing down our democratic institutions and stopping the peaceful transfer of power.

One of these key reforms is included in the year-end omnibus spending bill, and will reform the 19th century Electoral Count Act, the law that governs the congressional process used to certify the winner of a presidential election. It was this archaic law that Trump sought to exploit, by pressuring his own vice president to reject the states' lawfully selected electors and declare Trump to be the winner. Under this new reform, Congress reaffirms that the vice president has no such authority and, crucially, that after an election a state cannot change the rules for awarding electors to effectively nullify the popular vote of its constituents.

Another reform we recommend is a law clarifying the House's ability to enforce its own subpoenas, and to seek expedited enforcement in the courts. This mirrors a provision in the Protecting Our Democracy Act, a bill I authored last year which passed the House but was held up by Senate Republicans.

Even now, committee subpoenas are being litigated in the courts, their enforcement stalled by the litigious practices of Trump and his enablers. When the current session of Congress ends on Jan. 3, 2023, those subpoenas will lose their force, and would do so even if the new majority were not bent on thwarting our work. The subjects of congressional investigation should never again be able to evade oversight by exploiting the glacial speed of the courts.

We must also confront the rising tide of bigotry and the increasing danger of racially motivated violent domestic extremism. The Jan. 6 insurrection was not just a reaction to Trump's "Big Lie" alleging massive fraud, it was also an assault on our institutions by white nationalist groups bent on supporting a president entirely sympathetic to their cause. Unless we address these threats, we will continue to leave our country and our democracy vulnerable. For this reason, our committee recommends reforms meant to achieve a whole-of-government approach to combating domestic violent extremists and violent anti-government militias.

Other important reforms would narrow the applicability of the Insurrection Act, which Trump supporters urged him to invoke as a means of justifying the use of force to stop the joint session of Congress. We should also clarify who has standing to seek a court order disqualifying an insurrectionist from holding office under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment, address the role social media plays in radicalizing people, protect election workers from threats and intimidation, and more.

When the Sept. 11 Commission concluded its report, its members spent the next several years—along with the families of victims of that terrible tragedy—making the case to the country and the Congress why reforms were so vital to preventing another attack. There may be a similar role for our nine members, including those soon to depart Congress, in seeing that these new protections become law.

The oversight the Jan. 6 committee did was difficult, and the pursuit of justice may be even more so, but the steps we take to prevent another despot from subverting our democracy in the future may be the most challenging and consequen-

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rebuilding our economy

The new administration has pledged to "rebuild trust," which they have already began by keeping their word and incorporating some Democrats into their transition and hopefully this trend will continue in their administration. I have talked to the governor-elect and he is dead set on keeping his word to rebuild the trust in our government by being honorable, open, fair, and truthful. But the hard part is rebuilding our economy.

Every child who has blown a bubble knows that a bubble has a very fragile and short life span, yet that is what Ralph did with his "bubble tourism" that has burst, when the CNMI needs real new infrastructure—attractions, promotions/marketing and the cooporation of the governments in the countries of our primary tourists. To do this, the CNMI also needs the help of Washington, D.C. in the State Department as rebuilding our economy is a monumental task that will take the support and help of the feds and all the major stakeholders, as the AD administration can't do it alone. The CNMI has virtually never used the Covenant for the practical purpose of improving the CNMI, as "technical assistance" is part of our Covenant, but we had leaders who seem to think they didn't need the help of the feds unless it was money. We need the feds help so we can make our own money, which I'm sure the feds are willing to accommodate, but if we never ask them for technical help with our economy, they can never say yes.

There is also the need to fix the existing economic variables that can contribute to our economy, but they have been neglected and are just wasting away. Ralph has been only concerned with one thing: spending all the ARPA money as fast as he can, which is why he wanted 100% reprograming authority.

Economics state that a city, state or nation must have an expanded economic base, as one crop economies can easily be devastated. We have been depending upon "one crop"—gambling—that is clearly not working out and now that the Chinese government has refused to allow their citizens to come here to gamble, we must change our economic game plan.

I have been trying to get our leaders to expand our economic base for over two decades, but they could only think about gambling, which died as being the most effective economic engine nearly two decades ago. We can learn from one of the most prolific gambling destinations in the world, Las Vegas, that had to change to become a family-oriented destination as it's one big theme park now, with gambling being a byproduct of their tourism. We must do the same for the CNMI that must transition from being solely a gambling destination to a family-oriented destination and a destination for cannabis users. Las Vegas ran out of marijuana the first week they started cannabis tourism, but we haven't done a single promotion for our cannabis tourism. So, if you voted for change, change is coming soon with AD!

Ambrose M. Bennett
Kagman III, Saipan

REFORM

From page 8

were held recently at a border processing center designed to hold 3,500. Border officials said in that report they had encountered 15,000 migrants in the previous week alone.

The situation may only worsen when pandemic measures that had allowed some control over entry expire. And yet, there seems to be little or no momentum for the immigration reform that lawmakers profess is so needed. There has been constructive, sustained work on potential solutions over the years, but it all seems to meet the same unfortunate end.

The same year Trump rescinded DACA, Tillis and two other Republicans introduced a bill that would have granted Dreamers conditional permanent resident status. Depending on educational attainment, "good moral character," lack of criminal history and compliance with tax responsibilities, the SUCCEED bill would have provided a long but eventual path to naturalization. That bill went nowhere, as did 10 previous iterations of the DREAM Act pushed by Democrats.

Though other details had not yet been formalized, the border-related items in the Sinema-Tillis bill were said to include more and better-paid Border Patrol agents, more funds for Homeland Security detention facilities, and stiffer penalties for migrants who missed court hearings, along with better and faster processing of credible asylum claims.

The proposal drew support from moderate lawmakers and several organizations—along with the usual criticism on both sides. That is to be expected. What is disheartening is to see even this modest attempt to bridge differences fail.

In a shrinking, aging labor market, the U.S. needs immigrants. Minnesota, where there are four applicants for every 10 job openings, is a prime example. We need the vitality and youth that immigrants bring. At the same time, uncontrolled, mass crossings into this country pose a danger and are unsustainable. It should be obvious to all sides that this system is badly in need of updating.

The Sinema-Tillis bill may have run out of time this year, but it is worth resurrecting in a new Congress. Debate it. Change it. But act.

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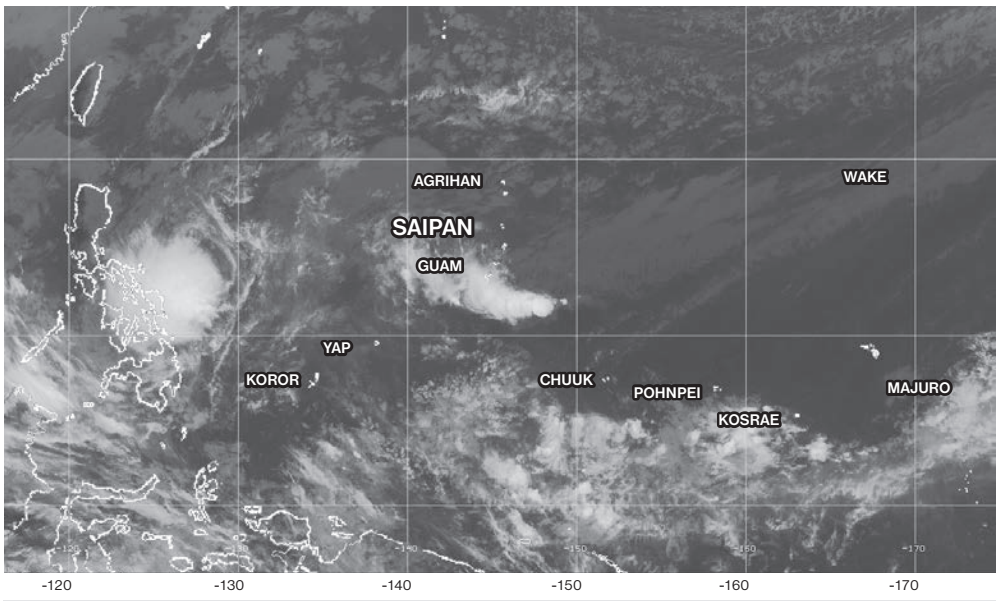
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny
85º 75º	85º 76º	86º 76º	86º 76º	86º 76º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:24 AM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

The Guam Doppler weather radar shows scattered showers south of Guam, with some stratifying remnants over the southern half of the island. Isolated showers in the Rota waters, and if any are in the Tinian and Saipan waters, the beam is overshooting them, so the tops are low. This is being caused by a shear line which is currently just south of Guam. The buoys reveal combined seas of 9 to 11 feet, composed of a 6 to 8 foot east-northeast swell and a 6 to 8 foot north-northwest swell.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Isolated Thunderstorms/Wind	85° / 77°
Palau	Partly Cloudy	84° / 76°
Yap	Scattered Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	87° / 81°
Pohnpei	Cloudy	88° / 79°
Kosrae	Showers	85° / 79°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	83° / 79°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Friday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Saturday	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Sunday	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Monday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	11:32 AM	11:12 PM	-
Friday	12:19 PM	-	-
Saturday	-	12:46 AM	12:56 PM
Sunday	-	1:37 AM	1:34 PM
Monday	-	2:29 AM	2:14 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	76° / 64°
Beijing	Sunny	38° / 12°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	66° / 54°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	81° / 67°
London	Partly Cloudy	49° / 42°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	66° / 52°
Manila	Showers	81° / 75°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	69° / 55°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	75° / 71°
New York	Partly Cloudy	45° / 32°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	50° / 36°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	43° / 36°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	54° / 30°
Rome	Partly Cloudy	62° / 52°
Salem	Mostly Sunny	58° / 41°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	54° / 47°
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	33° / 17°
Tokyo	Sunny	54° / 36°
Washington, DC	Sunny	49° / 31°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
06:12 AM	Low Tide	-0.21
1:22 PM	High Tide	1.76
7:42 PM	Low Tide	0.76
-	-	-

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2022

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	6:00AM	7:45AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:40PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

OZ624	3:40PM	7:40PM	3, 6
TW308	4:30PM	8:20PM	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

BX621	3:10PM	6:30PM	3, 7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:40PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ623	9:00AM	2:40PM	3, 6
TW307	10:00AM	3:30PM	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

BX622	8:00AM	1:10PM	3, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS

INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF AUGUST 18, 2022

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:00 A.M.	7:15 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
9:50 A.M.	10:05 A.M.	
4:00 P.M.	4:15 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:10 A.M.	8:40 A.M.	
1:45 P.M.	2:15 P.M.	

SAIPAN TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:10 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	
5:15 P.M.	6:05 P.M.	

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:35 A.M.	7:50 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
10:25 A.M.	10:40 A.M.	
4:35 P.M.	4:50 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
9:00 A.M.	9:30 A.M.	
2:35 P.M.	3:05 P.M.	

GUAM TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:30 P.M.	1:20 P.M.	
6:40 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Relax at Namaste Beautiful Salon & Spa

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
Associate Editor

MARK RABAGO
Namaste Beautiful Salon & Spa is located on the ground floor of the USL Building along Middle Road in Gualo Rai.

Tired of the holiday hoopla brought about by last-minute gift shopping, back-to-back Christmas parties, never-ending reunions, and visits to niños and niñas?

Then saunter down to Namaste Beautiful Salon & Spa and pamper yourself for a change.

One of the newest salon and spa businesses on the island boasts of expert and professional staff and an interior that immediately transports you to South Asia.

Owner Laarni Zapanta said she and her business partners opened Namaste Beautiful Salon & Spa to give Saipan a totally different take on what the usual parlors and beauty salons offer on the island.

"Like most women I have been a customer of different salons on the island which is also how I met my business partners Mercy Garcia and Aimz Quito-Weiss. I've always searched for a salon with a quiet environment, no loud music, and no sharing gossip or personal problems (even if I was told that people go to salon for latest gossip). My partners and I wanted Namaste Beautiful to change that perception of beauty salons. We aimed to create a place for a total relaxation experience away from our daily responsibilities and worries, and just soak in to taking care of yourself, even just for a few hours," she said.

And since opening in October 2021, Zapanta couldn't be happier how business has been thriving at Namaste Beautiful Salon & Spa.

"The business is doing great. We are grateful for our customers' support. We currently have a Holiday Savings Promotion where our customers can save up to 15% on their total bill when they come in this month valid until January 15."

Zapanta owes Namaste Beautiful Salon & Spa's upward trajectory to starting slow and steadily building up its services.

"We started with just hair removal services and facials at our current location while waiting for our salon furniture shipment to come in from India. Our customers were very understanding of our situation and still came in to support Mercy who was the only staff we had at that time."

More than a year since opening its Middle Road location in Gualo Rai, Zapanta can proudly say Namaste Beautiful Salon & Spa is now a full-service salon and spa.

Aside from the aforementioned hair removal expert Mercy, Zapanta has since hired more staff ready to pamper the beauty needs of Namaste Beautiful Salon & Spa's customers.

"We have hair removal done by Mercy. She is famous on the island for this service and brings in many years of experience in this field. We also have facial and skin care services performed by Girlie [Castil]. She has 10 years of experience as a facialist in the Philippines from Dra. Macatangay. We also do hair and makeup which is done by the talented Mark [Villapa]. He also brings in 10 years of experience in this field. Lastly we have Analie [Paguio], who does foot spa, manicure, and pedicure services with five years of experience," she said.

Namaste Beautiful Salon & Spa fortunately wasn't at all affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We were not open during the pandemic. We opened when the majority of the population on the island was vaccinated and boosted."

As for the business' name, Zapanta said she's always been an admirer of yoga, the posture-based physical fitness, stress-relief and relaxation technique.

"I love practicing yoga. I feel grateful for life after I practice yoga and I also feel beautiful inside and out. Namaste is a mantra that the class says after a yoga session. I want our customers to feel the same way after they visit us. I want them to feel grateful (namaste) and beautiful. That's how I got the name and luckily my two partners agreed."

Namaste Beautiful Salon & Spa is located on the ground floor of the USL Building along Middle Road in Gualo Rai. It is open everyday from 10am to 7pm. For more information, call (670) 233-9642 or you may also contact them through Facebook and Instagram.

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Eli D. Cabrera
Administrator

Richard V.Salas
Director, DCRM

NOTICE OF CRM PUBLIC HEARING

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW)
CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW KAGMAN TRANSFER STATION
SAIPAN INTEGRATED SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
GABGAB ROAD, KAGMAN, SAIPAN
PUBLIC LAND - LOT NO. 004 G 07

The Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM) will be holding a public hearing for the following project:

CRM Major Siting Application No. CRM-MS2022-0002 (Amendment to SMS-00-X-129) – The Department of Public Works (DPW) is proposing to construct and operate the new Solid Waste Transfer Station along Gabgab Road in Kagman, Saipan. The new Kagman Transfer Station includes road improvements of the existing Gabgab Road that leads to the transfer station and is designed to function as a community convenience center for residents to dispose their household solid waste.

The public hearing for this project is scheduled on **Tuesday, January 17, 2023, at 5:00PM, at the DCRM Learning Center 3rd Floor, Suite 301, Gualo Rai Center, Chalan Pale Arnold Road in Lower Gualo Rai, Saipan.**

To maintain the health and safety of all, virtual public participation is highly encouraged via video conferencing through Zoom link: https://zoom.us/j (Meeting ID: 6706648315). Our Zoom meeting access code may change, please call the DCRM Permitting Office at (670) 664-8300 for connection assistance at least one-day prior to the public hearing date.

If you are unable to attend, written comments can be submitted to the DCRM Permitting Office, Suite 305, Gualo Rai Center, Middle Road, Gualo Rai, Saipan, or mailed to the Division of Coastal Resources Management, P.O. Box 501304, or sent by fax at 664-8315, or by email at ssablan@dcrm.gov.mp. The project file is open for review and comments during regular business hours from 7:30 A.M. – 4:30 P.M., Monday through Friday. All written and oral comments received by DCRM will be included as part of the permit application records and will be considered in any decisions concerning the proposed project. Please contact Ms. Sam Sablan at the DCRM Permitting Office at 664-8300/1 if you have any questions or would like to learn more about the new Kagman Transfer Station project.

/s/ Richard V. Salas
Director
Division of Coastal Resources Management

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

REQUEST FOR ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING SERVICES
CUC-RAESP-23-004

A&E Design Services for Tinian Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and Collection System & Rota Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and Collection System Preliminary Engineering Report

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified Architectural and Engineering (A&E) firms for Preliminary Engineering Reports (PER) for a Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and Collection System on Tinian and Rota. The services shall include preparation of the PER as per USDA RUS Bulletin 1780-2.

This project is funded by a grant from the United States Office of Insular Affairs, U.S. Department of Interior.

Prospective Proposers for this project must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division via email to marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org. The RAESP package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office via email after registration.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies of the Proposal and One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of the Cost Proposal in a separate envelope must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-RAESP-23-004, A&E Services for Tinian Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and Collection System & Rota Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and Collection System – Preliminary Engineering Report",** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 a.m., (ChST) on January 18, 2023. Late submissions and conditional proposals will not be considered.**

Discussions may be conducted with responsible proposers who submit proposal determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from the proposal submitted by competing proposers.

All proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the proposers due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Consultant's preparation of a proposal under the contract. The RAESP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the statement of qualifications under this request, or to procure or contract for services. Consultants are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This RAESP and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 28, 2022** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email – manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Ms. Nicolette Villagomez, CUC Water/Wastewater, Engineer – via email, nicolette.villagomez@cucgov.org; Larry Manacop, CUC Acting Chief Engineer at email larry.manacop@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, Administrative Technician Senior – via email marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and waive any imperfection in the proposal in the best interest of the government. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

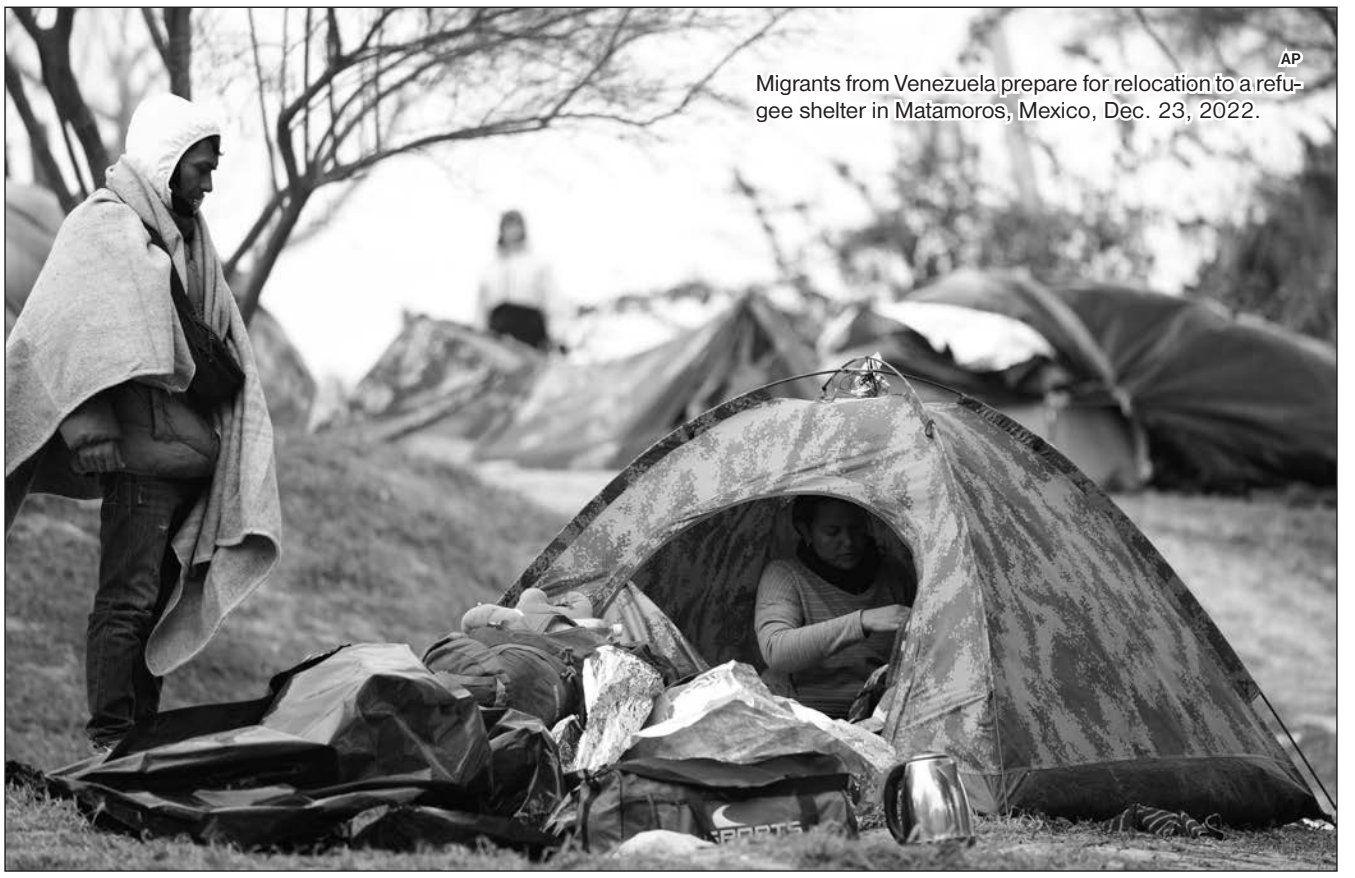
MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Nation

US Supreme Court keeps asylum limits in place for now

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Supreme Court is keeping pandemic-era limits on asylum in place for now, dashing hopes of migrants who have been fleeing violence and inequality in Latin America and elsewhere to reach the United States.

Tuesday's ruling preserves a major Trump-era policy that was scheduled to expire under a judge's order on Dec. 21. The case will be argued in February and a stay imposed last week by Chief Justice John Roberts will remain in place until the justices make a decision.



AP

Migrants from Venezuela prepare for relocation to a refugee shelter in Matamoros, Mexico, Dec. 23, 2022.

The limits, often known as Title 42 in reference to a 1944 public health law, were put in place under then-President Donald Trump at the beginning of the pandemic, but unwinding it has taken a torturous route through the courts. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention attempted to end the policy in April 2022, but a federal judge in Louisiana sided with 19 Republican-led states in May to order it kept in place. Another federal judge in Washington said in November that Title 42 must end, sending the dispute to the Supreme Court. Officials have expelled asylum-seekers inside the United States 2.5 million times on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Immigration advocates sued to end the policy, saying it goes against American and international obligations to people fleeing to the U.S. to escape persecution. They've also argued that the policy is outdated as coronavirus treatments improve.

The Supreme Court's 5-4 decision comes as thousands of migrants have gathered on the Mexican side of the border, filling shelters and worrying advocates who are scrambling to figure out how to care for them.

"We are deeply disappointed for all the desperate asylum seekers who will continue to suffer because of Title 42, but we will continue fighting to eventually end the policy," said Lee Gelernt, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union, which had been arguing to end Title 42's use.

Andrea Rudnik, co-founder of non-profit immigration aid organization Team Brownsville in South Texas, said the situation at the border is a humanitarian crisis. She said there are thousands of migrants camped on cardboard boxes and in makeshift tents near the entrance of the Gateway International Bridge in Matamoros, Mexico, opposite Brownsville, without food, water, clothing or bathrooms.

"It is very readily becoming a dangerous situation because there's no toilets," Rudnik said. "Get that many people together with no bathrooms and you know what you have got."

States that wanted Title 42 kept in place hailed the outcome. In a press release Tuesday, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds praised the court's decision while saying it's not a permanent solution to the country's immigration woes.

Southwest cancels more flights, attracts federal investigation

DALLAS (AP)—Southwest Airlines scrubbed thousands of flights again Tuesday in the aftermath of the massive winter storm that wrecked Christmas travel plans across the U.S., and the federal government said it would investigate why the company lagged so far behind other carriers.

A day after most U.S. airlines had recovered from the storm, Southwest called off about 2,600 more flights on the East Coast by late afternoon. Those flights accounted for more than 80% of the 3,000 trips that got canceled nationwide Tuesday, according to tracking service FlightAware.

And the chaos seemed certain to continue. The airline also scrubbed 2,500 flights for Wednesday and nearly 1,400 for Thursday as it tried to restore order to its mangled schedule.

At airports with major Southwest operations, customers stood in long lines hoping to find a seat on another flight. They described waiting hours on hold for help, only to be cut off. Some tried to rent cars to get to their destinations sooner. Others found spots to sleep on the floor. Luggage piled up in huge heaps.

Conrad Stoll, a 66-year-old retired construction worker in Missouri, planned to fly from Kansas City to Los Angeles for his father's 90th birthday party until his Southwest flight was canceled early Tuesday. He said he won't get to see his 88-year-old mother either.

"I went there in 2019, and she looked at me and said, 'I'm not going to see you again.'" Stoll said. "My sister has been taking care of them, and she's just like, 'They're really losing it really quick.'"

Stoll hopes to get another chance to see his parents in the spring, when the weather is warmer.

In a video that Southwest posted late Tuesday, CEO Robert Jordan said Southwest would operate a reduced schedule for several days but hoped to be "back on track before next week."

Jordan blamed the winter storm for snarling the airline's "highly complex" network. He said Southwest's tools for recovering from disruptions work "99% of the time, but clearly we need to double down" on upgrading systems to avoid a repeat of this week.

"We have some real work to do in making this right," said Jordan, a 34-year Southwest veteran who became CEO in February. "For now, I want you to know that we are committed to that."

The problems began over the weekend and snowballed Monday, when Southwest called off more than 70% of its flights.

That was after the worst of the storm had passed. The airline said many pilots and flight attendants were out of position to work their flights. Leaders of unions representing Southwest pilots and flight attendants blamed antiquated crew-scheduling software and criticized company management.

Casey Murray, president of the Southwest Airlines Pilots Association, said the airline failed to fix problems that caused a similar meltdown in October 2021.

ACROSS THE NATION

Lake on hook for $33K in witness fees in failed challenge

PHOENIX (AP)—A judge has ordered Kari Lake, the Republican who lost the Arizona governor's race, to pay $33,000 in fees for witnesses who helped defend election officials against Lake's failed challenge of her defeat to Democrat Katie Hobbs, but rejected a request for hundreds of thousands of dollars in fees for the attorneys who defended the officials.

In an order Tuesday, Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Peter Thompson declined to impose sanctions against Lake and her lawyers, saying Lake's failure to prove her case doesn't "equate to a finding that her claims were, or were not, groundless and presented in bad faith."

Thompson, who was appointed by former Republican Gov. Jan Brewer, pointed to a statistical analysis by a pollster who had testified on behalf of Lake. The witness, who conducts public-opinion polls and is not an election worker, claimed technical problems at polling places on Election Day had disenfranchised enough voters that it would have changed the outcome of the race in Lake's favor.

Although the analysis was never admitted into evidence at a two-day trial last week because of its unsupported assumptions, the judge said there was no case law to rule out using a statistical analysis as a way to prove a lawsuit that challenges election results.

Lawyers for Maricopa County and Hobbs, representing her in her roles as both the outgoing secretary of state and governor-elect, had requested about $695,000 in attorney fees and other legal costs, including the $33,000 in fees for witnesses. The attorneys argued Lake's lawsuit was groundless and brought in bad faith.

Lake, who lost to Hobbs by just over 17,000 votes, was among the most vocal 2022 Republicans promoting former President Donald Trump's election lies, which she made the centerpiece of her campaign. While most of the other election deniers around the country conceded after losing their races in November, Lake has not.

80-year-old California store owner who shot robber dies

NORCO, Calif. (AP)— An 80-year-old Southern California liquor store owner who opened fire with a shotgun and wounded a would-be armed robber this summer has died, the store reported Tuesday.

Craig Cope died Tuesday morning, and a memorial at Norco Market & Liquor will be held at a later date, according to a Facebook post. It didn't mention a cause of death.

Cope was alone at the counter shortly before 3 a.m. on July 31 in Norco in Riverside County when a man in a ski mask came through the door, pointing a rifle and demanding: "Hands in the air! Hands in the air!" Surveillance video shows Cope firing one blast from the shotgun.

The gunman fled. Surveillance cameras outside the store caught him screaming "He shot my arm off, he shot my arm off!" as he got into a car and was driven away.

"I didn't have time to be afraid" after the car with four robbers pulled into the parking lot, and some got out wearing masks and gloves and holding weapons, Cope told KTTV-TV.

One robber came through the door with what Cope said appeared to be a semiautomatic rifle.

"The guy pointed the gun directly at me. It was him or me," Cope told the station.

Four men were later arrested at a hospital where the wounded suspect was being treated. The getaway car had been stolen in Las Vegas and contained stolen weapons, authorities said.

Asia

Rain, flooding in PH cause at least 25 deaths, damage

AP

In this image provided by the Philippine Coast Guard, an elderly woman sits on a chair while being carried by coast guard personnel wading through floodwaters in Plaridel, Misamis Occidental province in the southern Philippines, Monday, Dec. 26, 2022.

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The death toll from heavy rains and floods that devastated parts of the Philippines over the Christmas weekend has risen to 25, with 26 others still missing, the national disaster response agency said Wednesday.

Nearly 400,000 people were affected, with over 81,000 still in shelters and nine others injured, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said.

Sixteen of the 25 deaths were reported in Northern Mindanao region in the south, while 12 of the 26 missing are from the eastern Bicol region, the council added.

A shear line — the point where warm and cold air meet — triggered rains in parts of eastern, central and southern Philippines, the state weather bureau PAGASA said.

The weather disturbance disrupted Christmas celebration in affected provinces, with photos from the southern province of Misamis Occidental showing rescuers carrying an elderly woman on a plastic chair as they waded through a flooded street. Some residents in the province were seen hanging on to floaters as coast guard rescuers pulled them across chest-deep flood using a rope.

The disaster management council said 1,196 houses were damaged by the floods, while sections of 123 roads and 12 bridges were affected. Some areas remain without power or water supply.

While the effect of the shear line has weakened, a new low pressure area may bring moderate to heavy rains within the next 24 hours to the same areas affected by the Christmas weekend floods. The weather bureau said Wednesday that flooding and landslides are likely, especially in areas with significant prior rainfall.

Each year about 20 typhoons and storms batter the Philippines, one of the world's most disaster-prone countries. The archipelago is located on the "Ring of Fire" along the Pacific Ocean's rim, where many volcanic eruptions and earthquakes occur.

North Korea's Kim lays out key goals to boost military power

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korean leader Kim Jong Un presented unspecified goals to further bolster his military power next year at a meeting of top political officials, state media reported Wednesday, in an indication he'll continue his provocative run of weapons displays.

Kim's statement came as animosities with rival South Korea rose sharply this week as the South accused the North of flying drones across the rivals' border for the first time in five years. This year, North Korea already performed a record number of missile tests in what experts call an attempt to modernize its arsenal and increase its leverage in future dealings with the United States.

During the Tuesday session at the ongoing plenary meeting of the ruling Workers' Party, Kim analyzed new security challenges in international politics and on the Korean Peninsula and clarified principles and directions to take in external relations and fights against enemies to protect national interests and sovereignty, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

Kim "set forth new key goals for bolstering up the self-reliant defense capability to be pushed ahead with in 2023 under the multilaterally changing situation," KCNA said, without elaborating.

Some observers say the new goals could be related to Kim's push to expand his nuclear arsenal and introduce a spate of high-tech weapons systems such as multi-warhead missiles, a more agile long-range weapon, a spy satellite and advanced drones. They say Kim would eventually aim to use his boosted nuclear capability to force its rivals to accept the North as a legitimate nuclear state, a status he would think is essential in getting international sanctions on his country to be lifted.

On Monday, South Korea's military fired warning shots and launched fighter jets and helicopters, after detecting what it called five North Korean drones that violated the South's airspace. South Korea also flown its own surveillance assets, in a likely reference to unmanned drones, across the border into North Korea in response.

World

Lavrov: Ukraine must demilitarize

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Russia's foreign minister on Tuesday warned anew Ukraine that it must demilitarize, threatening further military action and falsely accusing Kyiv and the West of fueling the war that started with Moscow's invasion.

» Or Russia will do it

Sergey Lavrov said Ukraine must remove any military threat to Russia — otherwise "the Russian army (will) solve the issue." His comments also reflected persistent unfounded claims by the Kremlin that Ukraine and its Western allies were responsible for the 10-month war, which has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions.

Russia launched the war on Feb. 24, alleging a threat to its security and a plot to bring NATO to its doorstep. Lavrov reiterated on Tuesday that the West was feeding the war in Ukraine to weaken Russia, and said that it depends on Kyiv and Washington how long the conflict will last.

"As for the duration of the conflict, the ball is on the side of the (Kyiv) regime and Washington that stands behind its back," Lavrov told the state Tass news agency. "They may stop senseless resistance at any moment."

In an apparent reaction, Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak tweeted that "Russia needs to face the reality."

"Neither total mobilization, nor panicky search for ammo, nor secret contracts with Iran, nor Lavrov's threats will help," he said. "Ukraine will demilitarize the RF (Russian Federation) to the end, oust the invaders from all occupied territories. Wait for the finale silently…"

A day earlier, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told the Associated Press in an interview that his government wants a summit to end the war but that he doesn't anticipate Russia taking part.

Kuleba said Ukraine wants a "peace" summit within two months with U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres acting as mediator. But he also said that Russia must face a war crimes tribunal before before his country directly talks with Moscow.

Both statements illustrate how complex and difficult any attempts to end the war could be. Ukraine has said in the past that it wouldn't negotiate with Russia before the full withdrawal of its troops, while Moscow insists its military gains and the 2014 annexation of the Crimean Peninsula cannot be ignored.

Testifying to the hardships of war, families of Ukrainian prisoners of war believed held by Russia on Tuesday said the Christmas holiday season is particularly painful and appealed for more to be done to bring their loves ones back home.

Neither Ukraine nor Russia have revealed the exact numbers of POWs they hold, while hundreds have been released as part of prisoner exchanges. Iryna Latysh's husband Yevhen was captured exactly 300 days ago, in the early days of the war, and she says Christmas isn't the same without him.

"We were decorating the Christmas tree together this time last year," she sobbed. "We put the star together, the decorations."

U.N. human rights investigators have warned that Ukrainian POWs appear to be facing "systematic" mistreatment — including torture — both when they are captured and when they are transferred into areas controlled by Russian forces or Russia itself.

Iran holds funerals for troops killed in 1980s Iraq war

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—Thousands of Iranians on Tuesday attended state-organized funerals for 400 soldiers killed in the 1980s Iran-Iraq war. Iran's president, meanwhile, lashed out at the United States and its allies, accusing them of fomenting anti-government protests that have been underway in Iran for over three months.

Caskets with the remains of "unidentified martyrs" were draped in Iranian flags and carried in mass processions. For many Iranian families, the conflict's painful legacy drags on in a continuous waiting for news of loved ones still "missing."

In January, 250 Iranian soldiers killed in the 1980-1988 war were buried in similar ceremonies.

Iran has been shaken by mass protests since mid-September over the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurdish woman who died after being detained by the country's morality police.

The protests rapidly escalated into calls for the overthrow of Iran's theocracy, established after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, marking one of the biggest challenges to the Iranian clerical rule in over four decades.

At least 507 protesters have been killed and more than 18,500 people have been arrested, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group that has closely monitored the unrest. Iranian authorities have not released figures for those killed or arrested.

In the capital, Tehran, the last farewell on Tuesday honored 200 soldiers whose remains were recently recovered from the former battlefields along the Iraq-Iran border. Funerals were held for another 200 soldiers in other cities and towns across Iran. None of the soldiers have been identified and their remains were to be buried as "unknown martyrs" in mass funerals.

From outside of Tehran University, trucks piled high with the caskets made their way through the streets. Men and women in black thronged the coffins, many weeping for those lost in the bloody, stalemated war started by Iraq's Saddam Hussein and his Baath Party in 1980.

Iran and Iraq sporadically exchange remains of soldiers recovered from borderland territory that witnessed major combat in the war, which left more than a million casualties on both sides.

Iranian state TV said the remains buried Tuesday were of troops killed in four battlefields, including in two locations inside Iraq. Along with the Iranian flag, many people also carried photographs of a top Iranian general, Qassem Soleimani, who was killed by a U.S. drone strike in January 2020 in Baghdad.

President Ebrahim Raisi and other top officials attended the ceremonies and praised "the martyrs," saying they help improve the nation's sprit, according to media reports.

Speaking at the ceremony, Raisi said efforts by the enemies of the nation — a reference to the U.S. and its allies — have sought to "pressure Iran during the recent protests" but have met with failure. Iranian authorities have blamed the unrest on their foreign adversaries, including the U.S. and Israel.

Environment

Conference highlights UOG Marine Lab's quest to restore reefs

A team from the University of Guam Marine Laboratory gave presentations at an international conference last September about its efforts to help revive the island's reefs through ocean nursery culturing and planting corals.

The UOG Marine Lab has been planting cultured corals onto reef flats in Piti and the Cocos Island lagoon while developing coral restoration practices.

The Marine Lab's efforts through the years have been crucial in working to better understand the resilience of Guam's reefs and to restore species impacted by bleaching. During bleaching, higher water temperatures, combined with sunlight, created heat stress on corals and can cause them to die.

Laurie Raymundo, director of the Marine Lab and professor of marine biology at UOG, was one of the presenters at the Reef Futures 2022 Conference in Key Largo, Florida from Sept. 26 to 30.

Raymundo said the corals that are being propagated in nurseries in the lagoon near Malesso and Piti Bomb Holes are doing well.

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

Ashley Castro, UOG Marine Lab restoration technician, presents her work on the growth rates of corals in the lab's nurseries during the Reef Futures conference in Key Largo, Florida from Sept. 26 to 30.

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

Marine biologist and director Laurie Raymundo of the University of Guam Marine Laboratory is seen cleaning a coral tree in the Piti Bomb Holes in Guam in 2021. She was one of the presenters at the Reef Futures conference on coral reef restoration, in Key Largo, Florida from Sept. 26 to 30.

The Marine Lab made international headlines when previous research led by Raymundo found that more than one-third of all coral reefs in Guam were killed from 2013 to 2017 over the course of multiple bleaching events.

According to Raymundo, the next bleaching event will be a matter of when not if.

"The five-year event was unique. But fortunately, we have not bleached badly since then. But we feel it's only a matter of time," Raymundo said.

Some of the other members of the UOG Marine Lab team who presented at the Reef Futures conference include:

Ashley Castro, restoration technician, who presented her work on the growth rates of corals in the nursery. Castro noted there were clear differences between closely related species and between the corals growing in the Piti nursery compared with those in the Cocos Lagoon nursery.

> **"Most visitors come because of our beautiful beaches and marine life. If we do not maintain them, we will probably lose our tourists.**

"These results will be helpful in identifying ways to improve our culture approaches and species that are responding differently in our two nurseries," Raymundo said.

Maria Andersen, also a restoration technician at the Marine Lab, gave a talk about how these species have fared after pruning and planting— how they are surviving and what is causing some mortality.

Marine Lab team members Renee Crisostomo and Carlos Tramonte also presented posters on their thesis projects.

The health of Guam's reefs also has an impact on one of Guam's main economic lifelines and job creators—tourism.

"We know from [Guam Visitors Bureau] reports that most visitors come because of our beautiful beaches and marine life. If we do not maintain them, we will probably lose our tourists."

The good news is that the Marine Lab's efforts overall—to give the Guam reefs a shot at survival—are gaining strides.

Overall, the cultured and transplanted and corals are all doing well, so far, Raymundo said.

The UOG Marine Laboratory was established as a research unit of UOG in 1970 and plays an important role in both national and regional marine research.

To learn more about the UOG Marine Lab, go to https://www.uog.edu/ml/ ***(UOG)***

Climate change threatens centuries-old oases in Morocco

ALNIF, Morocco (AP)— Residents of the oasis of Alnif say they can't remember a drought this bad: The land is dry. Some wells are empty. Palm groves that date back more than 100 years are barren.

Home to centuries-old oases that have been a trademark of Morocco, this region about 170 miles southeast of Marrakesh is reeling from the effects of climate change, which has created an emergency for the kingdom's agriculture.

Among those affected is Hammou Ben Ady, a nomad in the Tinghir region who leads his flock of sheep and goats in search of grazing grass. The drought forced him to rely on government handouts of fodder.

November is usually a cold, wet month in Alnif, but when the rain failed to come, the king called for rain prayers across the country, an old Islamic tradition during desperately dry times.

AP

Palm trees that have died as a result of drought are visible in the Nkob town, near Zagora, Morocco, Monday, Nov. 28, 2022.

Children led the procession, holding wooden planks inscribed with Quranic verses, followed by local officials and residents. They gathered near a dead oasis as a religious leader declared that the drought was a man-made disaster and that the rains will come when people atone for their sins and the way they have "treated the planet."

Resident Mo'chi Ahmad said the oasis has provided a livelihood for this population for hundreds of years. Now the oasis is "threatened with extinction," and everyone notices the disappearing palm trees.

In the last three years, hundreds of people from oasis areas have fled toward cities and many young people have migrated toward Europe, mainly because of the drought, said Mohamed Bozama, another resident.

He also blames the digging of unauthorized wells and rising demand for water from existing wells for worsening the crisis.

But for Hassan Bouazza, some of the solution lies in the hands of the people of the Alnif region. He was the first to install solar panels on the region's ksar, or castle, and began relying on the energy produced to dig wells and irrigate his fellow farmers' lands.

"We must learn to live with the situation we're in and think about ways to make the heat and drought work to our advantage," such as using new irrigation systems and solar power, he said.

He called for oasis inhabitants to be provided with training to help them move away from traditional irrigation in favor of drip irrigation, which requires significantly less water.

But sometimes, Bouazza said, it's hard not to despair when climate warnings are ignored.

"It is like a little child holds a dying bird in his hand, and all he does is laugh. This is how we are treating Mother Earth."

Life & Style

José Andrés and his daughters eat their way through Spain

NEW YORK (AP)—On his new TV show, celebrated chef José Andrés goes into a restaurant kitchen in Spain and confronts a massive moray eel. Only one of them is leaving that kitchen intact.

Andrés oversees as cooks prepare the eel for it's final flourish—deboned, sliced paper thin, dredged in three kinds of flour and then deep dried with cilantro.

"People of the world, I know you don't usually eat eel. But if you try it, you will love it," he says to the viewers. "Nothing can be more simple and more sophisticated at the same time."

That eel is just one delicious moment in discovery+'s "José Andrés and Family in Spain," which follows the chef, restaurateur and humanitarian on a food tour through his homeland with his three American-raised daughters, Carlota, Inés and Lucia Andrés.

AP

In this image provided by Discovery, Diego Guerrero, from left, Carlos Sanchez, Mila, Ines Andres, Carlota Andres, Jose Andres and Pepa Muñoz enjoy a meal the chefs prepared at Muñoz's house in a scene from the Discovery + television series "Jose Andres and Family in Spain."

The ladies join their dad as they visit such places as Barcelona, Madrid, Andalusia, Valencia, the Canary Islands and Asturias, where he was born and where the food, he says, made him who he is. It's a travel show, a cooking show and a parenting show, all wrapped up in a celebration of Spain and proud fatherhood.

"I think going with my dad and going to all of these places was just so special because he's such a curious person," Carlota Andrés says in a recent interview with her dad at The Bazaar, the elder Andrés' rooftop bar at the The Ritz-Carlton in New York. "That's the type of person that he is and no trip is the same if he's not there."

Throughout is José Andrés' infectious and ebullient spirit, a whirlwind of passion for food and respect for where it came from. He cheers both the deconstructive brilliance of august restaurant El Bulli and also humble street food.

Tapas turns out to be a perfect reflection of his philosophy on eating—going from place to place eating many things, cold and hot, fish and meat and vegetables—and making it a celebration of ingredients, hard work and life.

"If I was the president of the world, I would make it mandatory that every person has to go around the world for a year of their lives—country to country, culture to culture, continent to continent. If we all did that, the world would be a magical place. That's what this show celebrates," he says.

In Barcelona, José and his daughters ride electric scooters around the city, popping into restaurants, markets and cafes as dad bearhugs his old culinary friends, offering a delicious insider tour that involves tapas, red shrimp, sparkling wine and croquettes.

King Charles salutes late queen, public workers in speech

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III evoked memories Sunday of his late mother, Queen Elizabeth II, as he broadcast his first Christmas message as monarch in a speech that also paid tribute to the "selfless dedication" of Britain's public service workers, many of whom are in a fight with the government over pay.

Charles, 74, also empathized in the prerecorded message with people struggling to make ends meet "at a time of great anxiety and hardship." Like some other parts of the world, the U.K. is wrestling with high inflation that has caused a cost-of-living crisis for many households.

King Charles

The king's first remarks, however, recalled his mother, who died in September at age 96 after 70 years on the throne.

"Christmas is a particularly poignant time for all of us who have lost loved ones," Charles said. "We feel their absence that every familiar turn of the season and remember them in each cherished tradition."

Charles immediately ascended to the throne upon the queen's death. His coronation ceremony is scheduled for May.

For his televised Christmas message, he wore a dark blue suit. Unlike Elizabeth, who often sat at a desk to deliver the annual speech, Charles stood by a Christmas tree at St. George's Chapel, a church on the grounds of Windsor Castle where his mother and his father, Prince Philip, were buried.

Charles said he shared with his mother "a belief in the extraordinary ability of each person to touch, with goodness and compassion, the lives of others and to shine a light in the world around them."

"The essence of our community and the very foundation of our society" can be witnessed in "health and social care professionals and teachers and indeed all those working in public service whose skill and commitment are at the heart of our communities," the king said.

Strikes this month by nurses, ambulance crews, teachers, postal workers and train drivers have put pressure on U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government. Opinion polls show a high level of support for the workers, especially nurses. Unions are seeking pay raises in line with inflation, whch stood at 10.7% in November.

Soaring food and energy prices in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have created financial strains for many individuals and families.

Speaking over video footage of food banks and other charity work, Charles expressed sympathy for "those at home finding ways to pay their bills and keep their families fed and warm."

Absent mother uses guilt to manipulate her child

DEAR ABBY: I have always been the outsider in my family. My grandma raised me because Mom was an alcoholic and ran the streets with her boyfriend. My grandma died three months ago, and I have been having a hard time dealing with it.

My mother has moved into my grandma's house and wants me to come visit her. This is a problem because everywhere I look, it reminds me of my grandma. I have told her this, but she thinks that since she's painted and decorated it differently, it shouldn't be a problem for me.

I am the only child who has anything to do with her (she gave up my oldest sister), and she uses guilt when I don't come out and help her clean or go grocery shopping for her. I was raised to believe that we should take care of our elders, but I still have issues with her not being in my life growing up. I don't know how to handle this without just refusing to go. What should I do?

CONFLICTED IN MISSOURI

DEAR CONFLICTED: Tell your mother the truth, just as you related it to me. Explain that although she may have painted and redecorated the house, seeing the place without your grandmother in it is depressing and you are no longer willing to do it. And the next time she asks you to help her clean or go shopping for her, say no and tell her why. Unless you have left something out of your letter about your relationship with her over the last decade, I don't think you should feel obligated to her at all.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: My father-in-law, 78, was a caregiver for 10 years before his wife died five years ago. After her passing, he eventually renewed his zest for life, joined clubs and found a girlfriend. His health challenges have mounted during the last two years, though, and he no longer has the energy to follow up on medical appointments or do much of anything.

My husband and I call him every day and visit three to four times a week. His medical issues can be surmounted, but he can no longer schedule appointments and advocate for himself with our overwhelmed medical community. If we press him on it, he gets defensive. He doesn't seem to want to talk about his medical problems, and he doesn't understand the burden he's placing on his son to medically advocate for him (a role he also held on behalf of his mother as she battled MS).

My husband (age 40) lost the last few years of his mom's life to a horrible disease. Now he's losing the last few years of his dad's life to indifference and depression. Should we keep pushing Dad to get medical attention? Should we keep dragging him to appointments and nagging him about it? Or should we just let him give up?

ROADBLOCK IN MINNESOTA

DEAR ABBY

BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR ROADBLOCK: It is important that your father-in-law be evaluated not only for depression but also for dementia. His mental ability in the areas of working memory, flexible thinking and self-control -- skills he needs to manage his daily life -- appears to have become impaired. His doctor needs to be made aware of what's going on. If you and your husband can confirm the reason this is happening, you may have the solution to your problem.

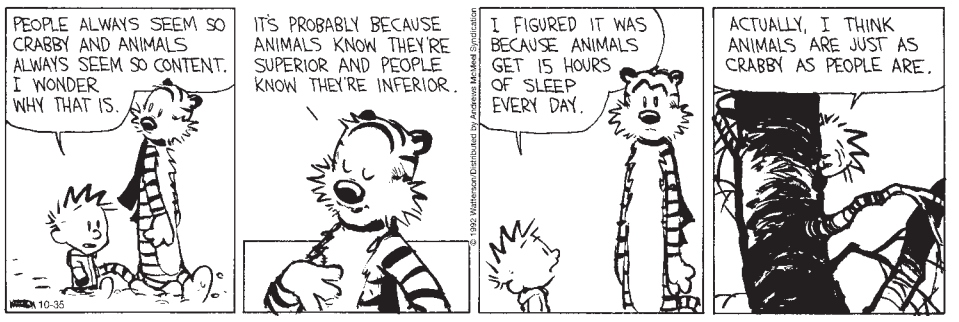
■■■

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


PEOPLE ALWAYS SEEM SO CRABBY AND ANIMALS ALWAYS SEEM SO CONTENT. I WONDER WHY THAT IS.
IT'S PROBABLY BECAUSE ANIMALS KNOW THEY'RE SUPERIOR AND PEOPLE KNOW THEY'RE INFERIOR.
I FIGURED IT WAS BECAUSE ANIMALS GET 15 HOURS OF SLEEP EVERY DAY.
ACTUALLY, I THINK ANIMALS ARE JUST AS CRABBY AS PEOPLE ARE.
© 1992 Watterson/Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication
10-35

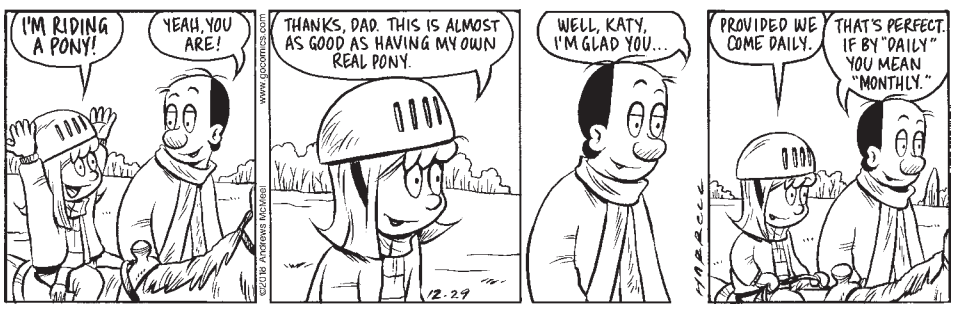
Garfield®

By Jim Davis

CREAK! CRACK! POP! POP!
JIM DAVIS 12-29
GARFIELD, I HEAR YOU TRYING TO SNEAK TO THE FRIDGE
CREAK! CRACK! CREAK!
© 2022 PAWS, INC. All Rights Reserved
STUPID KNEES
Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


I'M RIDING A PONY!
YEAH, YOU ARE!
THANKS, DAD. THIS IS ALMOST AS GOOD AS HAVING MY OWN REAL PONY.
WELL, KATY, I'M GLAD YOU...
PROVIDED WE COME DAILY.
THAT'S PERFECT. IF BY "DAILY" YOU MEAN "MONTHLY."
www.gocomics.com
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12-29

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CARL SAGAN ONCE SAID THAT THE UNIVERSE IS NEITHER BENIGN NOR HOSTILE...
BUT MERELY INDIFFERENT.
THAT EXPLAINS WHY CARL WAS NEVER INVITED TO HOLIDAY PARTIES.
12/29

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Small barrels
5 — Majesty
8 Goya's duchess
12 "Cold As Ever" rapper
13 Hot temper
14 Blend
15 Director Ephron
16 Third-yr. class
17 Colony denizens
18 Actress Jackson
20 Tiny bit
22 Italian dessert
26 Wander off
29 Bonn conjunction
30 Despondent
31 Meadows
32 Hwys.
33 Bee's home
34 NPR's Shapiro
35 French pronoun
36 Ping producer
37 Italian dessert
40 Feeble
41 Zimbabwe's capital
45 Mr. Guinness
47 Swelled head
49 "Phooey!"
50 Drench
51 Dorm VIPs
52 Director Kazan
53 Golf standards
54 "Ain't — Sweet" (classic song)
55 Toy store buy

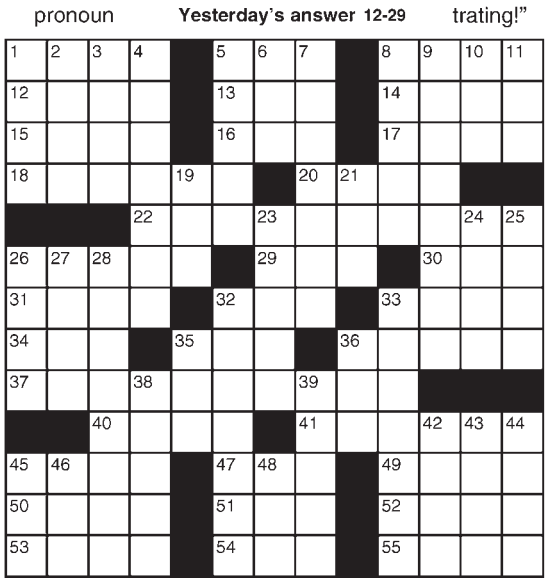
DOWN

1 Monarch
2 Earth sci.
3 Richard of "Chicago"
4 Poem divisions
5 Muslim woman's garment
6 Mess up
7 Quits
8 Expensive violin
9 "Chocolat" actress
10 Diner order
11 Billboards
19 24 hours
21 Vintage
23 Sound
24 PBS science show
25 Pitcher
26 High-five sound
27 Prefix with byte
28 Slickers and the like
32 Porch chairs
33 Stored selfishly
35 Goat's cry
36 Depot (Abbr.)
38 Guitar parts
39 "— were the days!"
42 Woody Guthrie's son
43 Banister
44 Listending abbr.
45 Nile viper
46 Mauna —
48 "So frustrating!"

Solution time: 24 mins.

		B	I	B			G	P	A			
	S	A	G	A		T	R	U	S	S		
P	E	R	O	N		A	E	R	I	E	S	
G	E	O	R	G	E	S	B	R	A	Q	U	E
A	N	N		L	A	K	E	S		U	M	P
			T	E	S	S			D	E	M	I
	R	I	N	S	E		A	C	E	L	A	
S	E	C	T			S	L	O	W			
A	C	A		S	E	I	S	M		L	I	U
G	A	R	B	A	N	Z	O	B	E	A	N	S
	P	U	E	N	T	E		I	N	T	R	A
		S	A	T	E	S		N	O	T	E	
			M	A	R			E	S	E		

Yesterday's answer 12-29



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Diego Luna, 43; Jude Law, 50; Patricia Clarkson, 63; Ted Danson, 75.

Happy Birthday: A modest approach to life, love and happiness will lead to a promising future. Curbing habits quickly and honing skills that add to your efficiency will positively impact your life and financial well-being. Don't fear change. Come up with a simple plan that leads to your goal; success will follow. Your numbers are 7, 10, 18, 24, 34, 37, 46.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Do your thing and finish what you start. It's what you accomplish that will make an impression. Rely on facts, and don't promise more than you can deliver. Flaunt what you have to offer with pride, sophistication and a little Aries flair. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Make up your mind and head down the appropriate path. You've got more going for you than you realize. Your confidence will make a difference; speak up and share your concerns. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Avoid letting others impose on you. Dedicate your time to something that makes you feel good about yourself and what you have to offer. Being responsible and delivering what you promise will put you in a comfortable position next year. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Stick to a plan and budget. Back away from people trying to take your cash or talk you into situations risky to your health or financial well-being. Choose peace and love over discord, and you'll have no regrets. ✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Letting uncertainty spark your imagination will encourage you to use your skills to help others. It's up to you to devise a strategy combining what's trending with what you can contribute. Market yourself for success. ✪✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Spending on things you don't need will leave you short of cash. A bargain is only worthwhile if it's something you need. Pay more attention to loved ones, and bring your family unit or community closer together. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* A race against time will require energy, intelligence and discipline if you plan to reach the finish line. Don't let someone's indulgence cause you to lose sight of what's at stake if you fall short of your expectations or responsibilities. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Make every moment count. Searching for personal growth, educational pursuits and mental stimulation will help tweak your plans for next year. Nurture meaningful relationships that offer positive personal change. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Respond quickly and be the one to save the day. High energy, an optimistic attitude and an innovative approach to what you want to achieve will raise interest. Review your relationships and consider which connections are most valuable. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Address unresolved issues. Stick to affordable solutions that won't compromise your reputation or relationships with others. Change is likely, but it doesn't have to be drastic. Make comfort and peace of mind your goals. ✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Contact someone who can offer clarity and vision regarding a change in your life. The suggestions you receive will require discipline and common sense to avoid taking on too much physically or financially. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Take a step back and rethink your next move. Overreacting will set you back. Make plans to do something that will keep you active and less likely to get into a heated discussion. Offer help, not criticism, and progress will follow. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are emotional, vibrant and changeable. You are receptive and appealing.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

			5		6			
	3	4				2	5	
			1		3			
1		5		6		8		2
8		2		7		4		9
			4		7			
	5	9				3	4	
			2		9			

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/29

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

5	8	9	7	4	6	1	3	2
2	7	6	1	3	8	5	9	4
3	1	4	9	2	5	8	6	7
8	3	7	5	6	2	9	4	1
4	9	1	8	7	3	2	5	6
6	2	5	4	1	9	3	7	8
1	6	8	3	9	7	4	2	5
9	5	2	6	8	4	7	1	3
7	4	3	2	5	1	6	8	9

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

SKATE PARKS **Solution: 7 letters**

E	S	I	U	R	C	F	T	S	I	R	W	T	(F) E
D	S	L	E	E	H	W	T	E	E	F	E	(A)	P N
I	R	D	O	K	E	R	S	H	O	E	(S)	O	U I
R	C	A	L	C	V	I	C	C	R	(T)	L	F	H P
S	O	S	Y	I	R	N	K	T	U	E	D	E	E S
R	R	A	P	K	U	K	S	N	N	R	L	A	C C
I	N	F	I	A	C	B	R	V	A	M	B	O	I O
A	E	E	L	G	N	A	I	O	E	B	O	T	W O
T	R	T	F	P	M	R	B	T	J	T	Y	D	A P
S	A	Y	O	P	O	E	I	U	E	U	D	E	V H
K	I	O	S	N	T	M	K	R	D	O	M	E	E O
C	L	P	M	A	R	B	E	N	C	H	I	P	C C
I	I	E	K	B	A	L	A	N	C	E	A	S	T K
R	N	S	E	P	I	P	F	L	A	H	B	M	X E
T	G	B	O	W	L	L	I	H	S	L	O	P	E Y

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Angle, Backyard, Balance, Bank, Bench, Bike, BMX, Bowl, Build, City, Corner, Cruise, Curb, Curve, Deck, Dome, Environment, Fast, Feet, Flip, Fun, Half-pipe, Helmet, Hill, Hockey, Ice, Jump, Kicker, Launcher, Loop, Pole, Railing, Ramps, Ride, Rink, Safety, Scoop, Scooter, Shape, Shoes, Skateboard, Slope, Speed, Spine, Stairs, Street, Trail, Tricks, Turn, Wave, Wheels, Wrist

Yesterday's Answer: How Y'all Doing

The NEW **Treasury 50** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Cardinals' J.J. Watt indicates he'll retire at end of season

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP)—J.J. Watt could be a terrifying presence on a football field, hunting opposing quarterbacks with unparalleled ferocity, particularly during the early 2010s with the Houston Texans.

But the 6-foot-5, 288-pounder also could be a joyful fan favorite, playing catch on the sideline with young fans in the stands before games.

Now one of the best defensive players in NFL history looks as if he's ready to call it a career.

Watt — a three-time AP Defensive Player of the Year — indicated Tuesday that he will retire at the end of the season, posting pictures of his wife and baby on social media while writing: "Koa's first ever NFL game. My last ever NFL home game. My heart is filled with nothing but love and gratitude. It's been an absolute honor and a pleasure."

The Arizona Cardinals defensive lineman and his wife, Kealia, became parents in October. Koa is the name of their son. Watt's two brothers, T.J. and Derek, also play in the NFL for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

"Unbelievable career!" Derek Watt posted on Twitter. "Can't wait for the Hall of Fame ceremony in 5yrs! #FirstBallot #ProudYoungerBrother"

T.J. Watt simply posted a picture in reply to J.J.'s post, a shot of character Michael Scott from "The Office" TV show, smiling with tears in his eyes. T.J. Watt is a three-time All-Pro and was the AP Defensive Player of the Year for last season.

AP

Arizona Cardinals defensive end J.J. Watt (99) celebrates his sack against the Denver Broncos during the first half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 18, 2022, in Denver.

J.J. Watt, 33, was among the premier defensive players in the NFL during the early 2010s with the Houston Texans. The former Wisconsin standout was a first-round pick in 2011 and was dominant from 2012 to 2015, finishing that four-year stretch with 69 sacks, to earn all three of his AP Defensive Player of the Year awards.

Watt was solid during his rookie season, but became a star in 2012, with a stunning 20 1/2 sacks and 39 tackles for a loss. His production dipped slightly in 2013 before two more big seasons. He had 20 1/2 sacks in 2014 and 17 1/2 in 2015.

His numbers slipped during the later half of his career, largely because of injuries. He missed big chunks of time in 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2021, but has had a late-career revival with the Cardinals — his 9 1/2 sacks this season are his most since 2018.

Watt spent his first 10 seasons with the Texans, leaving in 2021 as one of the most beloved figures in the city's sports history. His community efforts were unmatched, highlighted by raising more than $40 million for Hurricane Harvey relief, which earned him the 2017 Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award.

Sports Radio 610, which is the flagship station of the Texans, set up the J.J. Watt Goodbye Hotline that received hundreds of messages. The station tweeted a 30-minute montage of the calls, with plenty of lighter fare such as the man who planned to name his twins Jay and Jae and another who sang "I Will Always Love You."

But several men sounded as if they were choking back tears or actively weeping during their messages and one caller from Santa Fe, Texas, thanked Watt for paying for the funerals of the eight students and two teachers who died in a school shooting there in 2018.

Watt set Texans franchise records in sacks (101), tackles for loss (172), quarterback hits (281) and forced fumbles (25).

Watt has spent the past two seasons with the Cardinals. He has played some of his best football in Arizona over the past few weeks, with three sacks against the Broncos and two tackles for a loss on Christmas against the Buccaneers.

Watt's retirement isn't a total surprise. He had a health scare earlier this season when he had to have his heart shocked into rhythm after going into atrial fibrillation. He still played three days later in Arizona's win over the Carolina Panthers.

"I talked to cardiologists and electrophysiologists from all over the country," Watt said in October. "I was assured multiple times from multiple people that there was nothing else you could do. I could play like normal and something could happen the next day or never again in 20 years. So I was assured and I went back to practice on Friday and here we are.

"Obviously it's been a very emotional week for me and my family — for my wife and for myself," he added.

The Cardinals and Watt have two more games this season, both on the road against the Falcons and 49ers.

Impatient Penner leads Broncos' wide-open search for coach

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP)—His family bought the Denver Broncos last summer but it was on Tuesday that CEO Greg Penner really took ownership of the franchise.

Penner made it clear that not only will he lead the search for a new head coach but that Nathaniel Hackett's replacement will report directly to him and not to general manager George Paton.

"Yes, the new head coach will report to me, which is the more typical structure in the NFL," Penner said. "Obviously, the relationship between the general manager and the head coach is a critical one and George is going to be intimately involved with this process of looking for a new head coach and we'll make sure that there's a good fit there."

Penner, his wife, Carrie Walton-Penner, and her father, Rob Walton, purchased the team for $4.65 billion, a global record for a professional sports franchise. Limited partners include former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

The team has proven to be more of a fixer-upper than the new owners expected.

The Broncos have tumbled through a 4-11 season and quarterback Russell Wilson has stumbled through the worst season of his career after signing a $245 million extension before the opener.

"When we purchased this great franchise in August this is not the season we were expecting," Penner said, adding, "I want to personally apologize to our fans and all of Broncos country. We know that we need to be better and we will."

The Broncos have extended their playoff drought to seven years, mostly because of a sputtering offense that averages fewer than 16 points per game.

Hackett became just the fifth coach in NFL history not to make it through his first season. He's being replaced by interim coach Jerry Rosburg after Ejiro Evero, a candidate for the full-time job, declined the temporary offer, suggesting he'd be more of a help these last two weeks just sticking to his role as defensive coordinator.

The new head coach will have to find a way to fix Wilson and establish an offensive identity to match the team's stingy defense.

Penner said he wanted to wait until after the season to decide on Hackett's fate, but that all changed when the Broncos were blown out 51-14 by the Los Angeles Rams on Christmas Day.

Exacerbating the Broncos' embarrassment, guard Dalton Risner, the team's Walter Payton Man of the Year honoree, shoved backup QB Brett Rypien on the sideline and linebacker Randy Gregory threw a punch at Rams O-lineman Oday Aboushi during postgame handshakes, resulting in a one-game suspension.

That debacle alone isn't what got Hackett fired with three years and more than $12 million left on his contract, but it did accelerate the conversations that led to his dismissal.

Penner said he "didn't go into this week thinking this was a time we were going to make a change. But after we saw the effort we put forward on Sunday, some of the things that were going on off the field, we just felt like it was time to make a decision."

Paton said he still thinks Hackett is "a great football coach" but that "it just didn't work out here."

"And that's on me," added Paton. "I take full responsibility for where we are as a football team. I brought in the head coach; I brought in most of the players. Those are my decisions, and there's no one to blame but me."

So, why, Penner was asked, does he maintain such faith in both his GM and his QB given their dreadful 2022 performances?

"So, the decision to have Russ here was a long-term one," Penner said. "This season has not been up to his standards or expectations. We saw some glimpses of (vintage Wilson) in the last few weeks. He knows he can play better. We know he can play better. And we know he'll do the right work in the offseason to be ready for next year."

Penner said he and his GM have daily conversations "and he acknowledged right up front there are a couple of decisions that haven't worked out as he had expected. But I understand his thought process. He understands the work that needs to be done this offseason. And I'm going to rely on him heavily as we go through and make these changes."

The Broncos aren't limiting their search to experienced NFL coaches even though their past three hires have been first-time head coaches who were fired before their contracts were up.

"It certainly helps, but it's not necessary," Paton said of previous NFL head coaching experience. "We're going to keep an open mind through this search."

Paton said he's not necessarily looking for a quarterback whisperer, either.

"That's not why we're getting a new coach, to turn around Russ," Paton said. "It's about the entire organization, it's about the entire football team. It's not one player. It's not whether Russ is fixable or not. We do believe he is, we do."

Luka Doncic scores 60 as Mavericks beat Knicks, 126-121

DALLAS (AP)—Luka Doncic had a franchise-record 60 points, 21 rebounds and 10 assists in a historic triple-double, including the tying basket off his intentionally missed free throw to force overtime as the Dallas Mavericks rallied for a wild 126-121 victory over the New York Knicks on Tuesday night.

Dallas was down nine with 33 seconds left in regulation before getting even in a back-and-forth sequence capped by Doncic missing a free throw on purpose, ending up with the loose ball on the rebound and hitting a jumper for a 115-115 tie with 1.0 seconds remaining.

The first 60-point game in Dallas history also included Doncic's career high in rebounds and was the first 60-20-10 game in NBA history. The 23-year-old superstar had his seventh triple-double of the season.

The Mavericks moved three games over .500 with a fourth consecutive victory, both marks matching their season bests.

Quentin Grimes scored a career-high 33 points for the Knicks, who lost a fourth consecutive game.

Jalen Brunson missed the game with a hip injury, unable to play in what would have been his return to Dallas.

AP

Dallas Mavericks guard Luka Doncic (77) celebrates scoring the game-tying basket in front of teammate Christian Wood (35) during the fourth quarter of an NBA basketball game against the New York Knicks in Dallas, Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2022.

Nuggets 113, Kings 106

In Sacramento, Calif., Michael Porter Jr. scored 30 points, Jamal Murray added 25 and the Nuggets rallied for their fifth straight win.

Porter and Murray sparked an 8-0 run in a span of 56 seconds late in the fourth quarter to turn a tie game into another win for the top team in the Western Conference.

Porter's 3-pointer broke a 96-all tie with 3:14 to play, and Murray followed with a desperation 3 just before the shot clock expired.

Nikola Jokic had 20 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds for the Nuggets, who have won eight of their last nine games.

De'Aaron Fox scored 26 points and Kevin Huerter added 11 for the Kings, who have lost three of four games to open a six-game homestand.

Suns 125, Grizzlies 108

In Memphis, Tenn., Duane Washington Jr. scored a career-high 26 points, powering Phoenix to the road win.

Washington, a two-way guard in his second year out of Ohio State, went 5 for 9 from 3-point range and 10 of 21 from the field overall.

Eight Suns scored in double figures, helping the team stop a three-game slide. Deandre Ayton had 15 points and 10 rebounds, and Chris Paul finished with 14 points and six assists.

Ja Morant led Memphis with 34 points. Desmond Bane was the only other Memphis player in double figures with 14 before Grizzlies coach Taylor Jenkins cleared his bench midway through the fourth quarter.

Wizards 116, 76ers 111

In Washington, Kristaps Porzingis scored 24 points, and Washington stopped Philadelphia's eight-game winning streak.

The Wizards withstood a 48-point effort by Joel Embiid and a 26-point, 13-assist performance by James Harden. The 76ers cut a 16-point deficit to one late in the game but couldn't overtake Washington.

Wizards guard Bradley Beal scored 19 points before missing the final 4:17 with what coach Wes Unseld Jr. described as left hamstring soreness.

Celtics 126, Rockets 102

In Boston, Jaylen Brown scored 14 of his 39 points in the third quarter, pouring it on after he was knocked to the parquet by a flagrant foul that sparked Boston to its third straight win.

Celtics star Jayson Tatum added 38 points and eight rebounds, and Robert Williams III grabbed 15 rebounds to go with his 11 points.

Jalen Green scored 28 and Kevin Porter Jr. had 22 points and nine assists for the Rockets, who snapped a five-game losing streak in Chicago on Monday.

Boston led 65-62 midway through the third quarter when Brown got the ball to the left of the basket and Porter came across the top of him with an emphatic shot block that sent the ball flying into Brown's face. The Celtics All-Star went to the ground, and Porter apologetically came over to check on him.

The play was ruled a flagrant foul; Brown hit both free throws to make it 67-62. The Rockets never got closer than five points after that sequence.

Interim Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla missed the game because of eye irritation and was replaced on the bench by assistant Damon Stoudamire.

Lakers 129, Magic 110

In Orlando, Fla., LeBron James scored 28 points, Russell Westbrook had a triple-double and the Lakers stopped a four-game slide,.

James also had seven rebounds and five assists in 31 minutes. The four-time NBA MVP had scored at least 30 points in each of his last seven games.

Thomas Bryant added 21 points and 10 rebounds for the Lakers, who shot 54.4% from the field. Westbrook finished with 15 points, 13 rebounds and 13 assists in a reserve role.

Markelle Fultz led Orlando with 16 points. Franz Wagner and Wendell Carter Jr. each had 15.

Orlando had won eight of nine.

Warriors 110, Hornets 105

In San Francisco, Klay Thompson had 29 points and Jonathan Kuminga delivered on both ends down the stretch, sending Golden State to the win.

Thompson went 5 for 12 from 3-point range. He also had five rebounds and four assists.

In one flashy sequence, Kuminga had a steal one possession and then a defensive rebound and go-ahead dunk moments later on the other end. He finished with 14 points and five rebounds.

Jordan Poole had 24 points and six assists for Golden State.

LaMelo Bell had 21 points and 10 rebounds for Charlotte, which lost 124-113 at Portland on Monday. Terry Rozier scored 19 points and Mason Plumlee grabbed 13 rebounds.

Thunder 130, Spurs 114

In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 28 points, eight assists and six rebounds, leading the Thunder to the victory.

Oklahoma went 4-3 on a season-high, seven-game homestand.

Mike Muscala, pressed into extended action due to an early injury to starting forward Aleksej Pokusevski, scored 19 points. Tre Mann had 17 and rookie Jalen Williams added 15 points and nine rebounds.

Devin Vassell scored 20 points for the Spurs. Keldon Johnson had 19 despite battling low back tightness and added 19.

Official Jenna Schroeder issued two quick technical fouls and ejected San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich with 11:13 left in the second quarter, after Popovich yelled "Do your job!" and other things at her. Assistant coach Brett Brown led the Spurs' bench the rest of the game.

Clippers 124, Raptors 113

In Toronto, Paul George scored 23 points, and the Clippers won for the seventh time in nine games.

Ivica Zubac had 23 points and 16 rebounds for Los Angeles, and Reggie Jackson scored 20 points.

Norman Powell scored 22 points and Kawhi Leonard had 15 as the two members of Toronto's 2019 championship team returned to Canada for the first time since before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leonard played in Toronto for the first time since Dec. 11, 2019, when he received his championship ring. Fans cheered when he was introduced before tipoff.

Pascal Siakam scored 36 points, topping 25 for the career-high fifth straight game, and Scottie Barnes had 17 points and 13 rebounds as the Raptors' home losing streak reached four.

Pacers 129, Hawks 114

In Indianapolis, Buddy Hield made six 3-pointers on his way to 28 points, leading Indiana to the win.

Hield hit 11 of 16 shots, including 6 of 7 from deep. He leads the NBA with 132 3s this season.

The Pacers led by 10 entering the fourth quarter and doubled that margin in about six minutes. Tyrese Haliburton had 23 points and seven assists. Myles Turner scored 18.

John Collins had 26 points and 10 rebounds for the Hawks, who were without injured starters De'Andre Hunter and Clint Capela. Trae Young had 22 points and 10 assists.

Braves sign Sean Murphy to a $73M, 6-year deal

ATLANTA (AP)—The Atlanta Braves signed newly acquired catcher Sean Murphy to a $73 million, six-year contract Tuesday, locking up another key player with a long-term deal.

The contract includes a $15 million club option for 2029 with no buyout that could raise the total value of the agreement to $88 million.

Murphy will make $4 million in 2023, $9 million in 2024 and $15 million each season from 2025 through 2028. He agreed to donate 1% of his annual salary to the Atlanta Braves Foundation.

The deal follows a familiar pattern of the Braves agreeing to new contracts with players who are still under club control for an extended period. Over the past year, they reached long-term deals with sluggers Austin Riley and Matt Olson, as well as rookie stars Michael Harris II and Spencer Strider.

Atlanta has previously signed outfielder Ronald Acuña Jr. and second baseman Ozzie Albies to similar pacts, ensuring that seven core players are under contract for at least three more seasons — and often much longer — with club options that could extend the deals even more.

The 28-year-old Murphy was acquired from the Oakland Athletics shortly after the winter meetings in a three-team deal that also included the Milwaukee Brewers.

The Braves sent All-Star catcher William Contreras and minor league pitcher Justin Yeager to the Brewers, while backup catcher Manny Piña and pitching prospects Kyle Muller, Freddy Tarnok and Royber Salinas went to Oakland.

Braves general manager Alex Anthopoulos acknowledged paying a heavy price, but said it was worth the cost to acquire one of the game's top catchers.

"We definitely gave up a ton," Anthopoulos said at the time. "But we got a really good player back. Getting players like that is hard."

Murphy batted .250 with 18 homers, 66 RBIs and a .759 OPS in 148 games this past season. He's regarded as an elite defender, winning a Gold Glove in 2021.

Murphy is expected to share playing time behind the plate with Travis d'Arnaud, a player with similar offensive and defensive strengths. Those two also are expected to get extensive time at designated hitter, with the idea of keeping them as fresh as possible over the long season.

The acquisition of Murphy has been the biggest offseason move for the five-time defending NL East champions, who also added depth in their bullpen with a trade for former All-Star reliever Joe Jiménez.

But for the second year in a row, one of the team's most popular and productive players left in free agency.

One year after first baseman Freddie Freeman signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers, longtime Braves shortstop Dansby Swanson finalized a $177 million, seven-year deal with the Chicago Cubs.

Vaughn Grissom and Orlando Arcia are the contenders to be Swanson's replacement unless the Braves make a move to bring in another shortstop before opening day.

Perfection so far for Blue Haus in open division

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Blue Haus continued to lord it over in the open division of the Legends Sports Association Invitational Basketball League after registering its fifth win in as many games last Dec. 19 at the Koblerville Basketball Court.

Prior to the league taking a two-week Christmas break, Blue Haus made sure to welcome the holidays on a high note following its 96-65 obliteration of Pacific Best Choice.

Pacific Best Choice actually took control of the game at the start and led 15-12 in the opening quarter thanks to Ryan Hipolito's hot shooting.

Blue House was still not in the mood in the second quarter although there were some signs of life as they trimmed their deficit to a mere candlestick, 38-39, at the break.

The undefeated team then showed their fangs come the second half, as Pacific Best Choice didn't have an answer to the barrage of points unleashed by Douglas Schmidt, Ivan Devero, and J.R. Barrios.

With the trio humming and Blue Haus' vaunted defense locking down Hipolito and company, Blue Haus outscored Pacific Best Choice, 31-13, to take a commanding 69-52 lead heading to the playoff period.

It was all over but the shouting in the fourth as Blue Haus again beat Pacific Best Choice black and blue thanks to some heavy lifting done by Brendon Talania and Alex Lauron and they ran away with the 30-point win.

Talania top-scored for Blue Haus with 17 points, while Lauron, Schmidt, Marlon De Dios, and Nate Mateo added at least 10 points.

Hipolito shone with 27 markers in the loss for Pacific Best Choice, which dropped to 3-3 in the win-loss standings

In other results in the open division, JTM Saipan improved to 5-1 and within striking range of Blue Haus after defeating Vizion Insurance (2-4), 116-100.

Changming Store (5-1) kept pace with JTM Saipan in second place following its 87-48 win over NAPA Auto Parts (3-3).

Pepoy's Rest Cafe (1-6) then proved that hope springs eternal after registering its first win of the season when it surprised Padrinos Tuesday Club (2-4), 85-63.

Marianas Health Services then evened its record to 3-3 with a forfeit win against winless Al-Ger Manpower, which dropped even deeper in the cellar at 0-6.

In the masters division, JSN Construction made short work of Vizion Insurance, 91-70, to raise its record to 5-1. Vizion Insurance dropped to 2-4.

Blue Haus kept abreast of JSN Construction after keeping Legends Elite winless in six games, 110-90.

Blue Haus 95 – Talania 17, Lauron 14, Schmidt 13, De Dios 12, N. Mateo 10, Fitial 8, D. Mateo 6, Devero 5, Barrios 4, Castro 3, Guiab 3.

Pacific Best Choice 65 – Hipolito 27, Chua 8, Bobares 7, Albert 6, Camacho 6, Arellano 4, Natividad 2, Galarse 2, Palermo 2.

Scoring by halves: 12-15, 38-39, 69-52, 95-65.

MARK RABAGO

Blue Haus' Douglas Schmidt goes up against Changing Market players in this file photo in the open division of the Legends Sports Association Invitational Basketball League at the Koblerville Basketball Court.

SITCHON

From Page 20

sition area that I was far behind, but when I reached the run as expected a lot of them overtook me," said Sitchon.

He added that approximately 60 athletes from various triathlon clubs took part in the Cavinti Triathlon.

"That's why I was a bit sad that I was alone and didn't have a teammate during the race. Although everyone was friendly," said Sitchon, who has been joining triathlons since 2000.

As far as how the course went, the president of Triathlon Association of the CNMI said the Cavinti Triathlon was a mix bag.

"The water was so murky that you cannot see anything beneath. The bike route was mostly uphill because of the remoteness of the province and the best thing about it is the run portion that was mostly downhill."

He also was thankful for the organizers for opting for the sprint triathlon rather than a full triathlon.

"It was rerouted into these distances to avoid the residents of the surrounding community, most especially the bike portion. It was held in the community of Cavinti, Laguna. It's a barangay in Laguna that promotes its lakes (Lumot Lake) as a tourist attraction."

Now that he was able to complete a triathlon anew, Sitchon may have to rethink his retirement plans for the sport.

"I was about to retire from triathlon, but the itch to race keeps pulling me back to join."

As far as overall results, Dash Ramirez topped the Cavinti Triathlon with a time of 1:07:57.1, while Maria Araceli Xerrah Sales was the top female triathlete after tearing the tape in 1:49:22.1.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Manny Sitchon starts the run portion of the Cavinti Triathlon in Laguna, Philippines last Dec. 11.

WATARU

From Page 20

ing training with the Professional Windsurfers Association, or PWA world tour riders.

He said, "I'm really happy to go there and I'm looking for some sponsors because for me to be in the world tour next year, I will need a lot of money and support."

"I know it would cost a lot of money and be difficult to go abroad during this period, but after finishing PWA, I had a lot of things to think about, and I thought if going now would be my chance, so I decided to go. If I go out there I can practice with some of the top athletes in the world every day and I'm going to learn a lot. I'm going to work hard to come back to level up more than I am now," Tajima said on his Facebook post.

Tajima recently debuted as a professional windsurfer and won third place overall in his professional windsurfing debut last June 24-26 at the Tsukasa Japan Cup 2022 in Amami Oshima, Kagoshima in Japan.

After his debut, Tajima is still competing for an Olympic berth to represent Japan in windsurfing for the 2024 Olympics.

Tajima is the son of Hiroshi and Hiroko Tajima of Saipan. He was taught windsurfing by his dad at the age of 12 at the Seawind Marine Sports in Micro Beach behind Hyatt Regency Saipan.

He relocated to Japan in March 2020 to hone and practice his skills as a windsurfer.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Wataru Tajima, right, secured a podium finish in the Wing Foil All Japan Championship held last Nov. 27 in the waters off Okinawa, Japan.

RUN

From Page 20

Saipan's Team Alpha and see if they can hang with the best. This race is also for all those people always talking about how fast they can run a mile. Back it up this Saturday."

"The end of the year 1 mile race is an all out competition for the athletes competing as well as the most accurate timing and measured course for people to record their 1 mile in the fastest mass participation race in the CNMI for road race. It's one way, down wind, and slightly down hill. I can't wait to see everyone there this week," added Dela Cruz.

Dela Cruz then added a warning and said "We do want to change the culture of Chamorro time and last-minute signup. For this race, since we are programming chips starting Friday, the race price is doubled per person so people have until today to sign up for the regular fee. No T-shirts or finisher medals this year. We are offering the gift of health and a glimpse of longevity with this race."

If you are up for the challenge, click this link to register: https://raceroster.com/events/2022/67679/run-from-22-mile-race?fbclid=IwAR0SXZaVITmKfeu-8-vS29_m1XoIyBX3y-XlaUNWc_w6YFjB-S78Op1mAV0k

Cardinals' J.J. Watt indicates he'll retire at end of season

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Perfection so far for Blue Haus in open division

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Sitchon silver finish in age group of PH triathlon

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Manny Sitchon shows off his silver medal at the finish line of the Cavinti Triathlon in Laguna, Philippines last Dec. 11.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Manny Sitchon continued to defy Father Time after finishing second in the over 60 division of the Cavinti Triathlon in Laguna, Philippines last Dec. 11.

The 64-year-old Island Business Systems and Supplies employee finished the 600m swim, 20km bike, and 6km run sprint triathlon in 1:58:48.6.

Sitchon said the Cavinti Triathlon served as his return to the sport as he previously thought of retiring because of a nagging knee injury.

"My reason for joining the race was I wanted to gauge myself if I could still join triathlons. I've been bothered by a knee injury since March 2022 so I really haven't trained in the run since then. I've continuously trained on the bike and swim, but in running nothing. I would be happy to run 8km a week on Saipan because of my injury," he told *Saipan Tribune*.

Isidro Manuel topped the over 60 age group after he crossed the finish line in 1:38:29.0, while third place went to Arnel Coching who clocked in at 2:15:38.6.

"The first placer in our age group, I learned, is a 61-year-old ultramarathoner… I did best in the swim and bike splits because I observed at the tran-

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Wataru 3rd in Wing Foil All Japan Championship Race

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Wataru Tajima continues to make waves in the sport of windsurfing as he racked up the bronze medal in his race class during the Wing Foil All Japan Championship last Nov. 27 in the waters off Okinawa, Japan.

After seven races, his total score earned him the third spot overall among 59 other competitors.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Wataru Tajima shows off his third place medal which he won in his race class during the Wing Foil All Japan Championship last Nov. 27 in the waters off Okinawa, Japan.

ATHLETES ABROAD

First place went to Kazuaki Kusunose and second place was Kenta Anami.

In an interview with *Saipan Tribune*, the Saipan born and raise Tajima said "I felt happy winning third for the first All Japan Wing Foil Race. Through the race, I was kind of mad at myself because I made so many simple mistakes that I usually don't, and I think it's because the conditions were rough. The wind direction shifted a lot, and there was a lot of seaweed, which made it hard for me to do good runs in the races."

On his Facebook post, he said "thank you so much everyone for your support. Next time, I'll do my best to get the championship trophy. Thank you Ogawa-san, Yumi-san, and Andy-san for taking care of everything this time."

This is not the last time that Okinawa will see Tajima as he said he will surely race there again.

After his race, Tajima also announced that he will be going to Tenerife, Spain for a month from January 2023 to February 2023 for windsurf-

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'Run from '22 Mile Race' this Saturday

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Run Saipan's Run from '22 Mile Race is set for this Saturday, Dec. 31, at 6:30am starting from the Buddhist Temple in Marpi to the former Marianas Resort & Spa parking lot.

Run from this year into the next and see if you are able to beat the record of Run Saipan's very own Keith Ketola, who was the only runner to run under 5 minutes—4:45— to win the 2021 1 Mile Race men's division, while Tania Tan ran a 5:49 mile to win the women's division.

Runners will use the One-Time timing chips, which according to Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr., must be returned right after the race. Otherwise, failure to do so will result in a temporary ban from Run Saipan races. Runners must also pay for the cost of it if lost or not returned.

Pick up of timing chips is set for tomorrow, Friday, Dec. 30, from 5pm to 8pm at the 2nd floor of Cha Cafe.

Race divisions are the top open men and women, 14-and-under, 18-and-under, ages 35-39, 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, and 60-and-up; along with a stroller division which Run Saipan is working with Northern Marianas Athletics and Oceania Athletics Association to introduce into this race.

RUN SAIPAN
RUN FROM 2022
1 MILE RACE

Dela Cruz said about the race, "I heard a lot of talk about how fast people were bragging they can run their 1 mile time at every island relay they have been to. Since we don't split time individually at the Annual Christmas Relay Race, this is their one chance to backup all that bark."

He said he designed the race with one goal in mind: to find out how fast a person can run their mile in the ideal condition and optimal settings. "This is also the chance for people to take on Run

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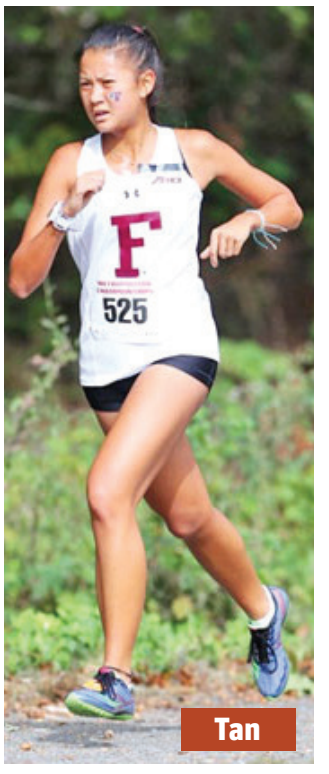

Tan

Ketola